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REPORT

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Thursday 11 October at 3.30 p.m.

In this report:

1. Speeches in English are reported in full.
2. Speeches in other languages are reported using the interpretation and are marked with an asterisk
3. The text of the amendments is available at the document centre and on the Assembly's website. Only oral amendments or oral sub-amendments are reproduced in the report of debates.
4. Speeches in German and Italian are reproduced in full in a separate document.
5. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1059A not later than 24 hours after the report has been circulated.

The contents page for this sitting is given at the end of the report.

(Ms Maury Pasquier, President of the Assembly, took the Chair at 3.35 p.m.)

The PRESIDENT* – The sitting is open.

1. The role of national parliaments in successful decentralisation processes

The PRESIDENT* – The first item of business this afternoon is the debate on the report titled “The role of national parliaments in successful decentralisation processes”, Document 14623, presented by Mr Luís Leite Ramos on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, which will be followed by a statement from Ms Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, president of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

I remind members that speaking time in this debate will be limited to four minutes.

In order to finish by 5.40 p.m. I shall interrupt the list of speakers at about 5.20 p.m. to allow time for the reply and the vote.

I call Mr Leite Ramos, rapporteur. You have 13 minutes in total, which you may divide between presentation of the report and reply to the debate.

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*)* – First and foremost I thank members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the European Committee on Democracy and Governance, the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, and the European Commission for Democracy through Law, as well as experts from the OECD, for their contributions to the report. I particularly thank Ms Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, president of the Congress, for her support for the report and her participation in our debate today; Mr Andreas Kiefer, secretary general of the Congress, for his support, suggestions and proposals in the preparation of the report; and Ms Yulia Pererva, Ms Maren Lambrecht and Ms Tanja Kleinsorge from the secretariat of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development for their professionalism, competence, commitment and devotion in the preparation and conclusion of the report.

Decentralisation is very dear to my heart, because of not only my academic background and professional experience but my political commitment to the principles and values of local autonomy and democratic governance. As a public administration official, professor, local elected representative and national parliamentarian, I have been personally involved in territorial reform, decentralisation processes and projects of trans-boundary co-operation, and have followed their developments in my country and around the world.

The subject is crucial for the welfare of our societies. Today, there are many conflicts among central, local and regional authorities. I am convinced that the best way to manage those conflicts is to put in place clear and transparent decentralisation processes and to make sure that they are implemented effectively. In recent decades, we have been witness to substantial progress in decentralisation. However, more recently, the process has failed, been put on the back-burner or even abandoned in some countries. Alarm bells have been rung by a number of bodies including the Congress.

One pre-conceived idea is that, in a time of crisis, strong power and therefore centralised power is best placed to confront difficulties. However, centralised power is not in a position to consider the diversity of opinions and to respond to the needs of the local population effectively. Excessive centralisation often generates frustration and resistance; that is a major risk for democratic stability and security. Therefore, decentralised power can offer the best solutions, and it can become the stronger of the two. Its strength lies in persuasion and negotiation, and in searching for common well-being accessible to all.

Of course that requires more time and resources, but it produces more solid and sustainable results. That is why the role of parliaments in decentralisation processes is absolutely essential. It concerns legislative tasks, including the adoption of the budget and the transcription of the essential aspects of decentralisation into the legislation of the country concerned. It is important that parliaments are involved from the very beginning of the process leading to decentralisation, and are not simply there to rubberstamp arrangements that have been negotiated by other stakeholders. Furthermore, the commitment of parliamentarians must go further in this area. Once laws are adopted, it is up to parliaments to ensure that the implementation is monitored transparently and effectively, that lessons are learned from the successes and failures, and that the process is adjusted along the way, as required.

The draft resolution makes concrete proposals: to introduce and strengthen parliamentary committees; to establish appropriate legal guarantees to make it possible for local communities to exercise their powers effectively and without obstacle; and to sign and ratify the additional protocol to the charter on the right to participate in the affairs of a local community. Those are some examples of what can be done. Our countries are very different, but we are all in a position to take measures that promote decentralisation.

I remind you that this year we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which recognises local democracy as a common European value and which provides a framework of action for our member States. This anniversary offers us an excellent opportunity to give new impetus to the reforms that are under way.

I thank the Croatian chairmanship-in-office of the Committee of Ministers for choosing decentralisation among its priorities. That is a strong signal of our governments' commitment to local and regional democracy. I hope the Assembly, the Congress and the Committee of Ministers will continue their dialogue on this subject in the years to come. I am very pleased that Mr Jean-Pierre Grin, my successor as general rapporteur on local and regional government, is committed to continuing that dialogue, and I wish him every success in fulfilling his mandate. I hope the draft resolution will be useful to those who work on decentralisation. I thank the Assembly for its attention, and I thank members in advance for their support.

The PRESIDENT* – Rapporteur, you have six minutes and 50 seconds left to respond to the debate.

It is now my pleasure to welcome Ms Mosler-Törnström, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. She knows this Chamber well, as she is often here with local and regional elected officials. We are pleased to hear her speak on the process of decentralisation and on the actions required to ensure that decentralisation is truly effective.

Ms Mosler-Törnström presides over a body with which we are not in close touch, and I congratulate her on all her positive work during her term of office, which is coming to an end. She has always promoted close co-operation with our Assembly, and I value her personal commitment to increasing the participation of women in political life. I thank her very much for being with us, and I am sure her contribution will be a seminal addition to our debate.

Ms Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM (*President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities*) – It is a pleasure and an honour to be here today. I am pleased to say that the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly are working more closely together than ever, and this debate is another reminder of the excellent co-operation between our two Assemblies. We have a lot to give each other and to the Council of Europe as a whole.

We have been enjoying especially strong co-operation with your general rapporteurs on local and regional authorities, and most recently with Luís Leite Ramos. We look forward to continuing that co-operation with his successor, Jean-Pierre Grin, who will be speaking at our next session in November.

Following those positive words, I must share some frank remarks that several members of the Parliamentary Assembly have made to me over the past few days. Some members have told me that they are not aware of what the Congress is doing, besides being the monitoring body for the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the only international body that systematically observes local elections.

I will give some examples of our work. The Congress holds an annual summit of mayors on preventing radicalisation, and we have prepared a handbook for inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue in municipalities. The Congress also prepares reports on preventing corruption at local and regional level, and it has made proposals on refugees and migrants in "From reception to integration". The solutions for most challenges can be found in the cities and regions. If it does not work at local level, it will not work at national level, either. We in the Congress are the actors of the Council of Europe at grassroots level. Many of the Council of Europe's conventions and policies have a local dimension.

I am pleased to say that, in the November session, the Congress will adopt a handbook on human rights activities for mayors. We will share this important tool with the Parliamentary Assembly and invite members to use and disseminate it, as many of you also hold a local mandate. I therefore believe that, beyond the good co-operation between our respective rapporteurs, we should work on advancing the mutual knowledge of our two institutions. There is always a need for better communication, for you and for us.

We should intensify our co-operation on decentralisation, which is our topic today. The report on the role of parliaments in decentralisation processes comes at a special moment for local democracy.

Decentralisation has had a tough time of late, partly but not only due to the financial crisis. A lot of mayors and councillors are feeling the pressure as their powers are eroded and their means to deliver are curtailed.

I read the report very carefully. It refers to our analysis of recurring issues. At the Congress, we recently highlighted the recurring issues that are challenging and even threatening local and regional democracy in Europe. It is interesting to note that there is a clear trend towards re-centralisation in our member States, such as increasing supervision of local and regional authorities by national authorities; lack of financial resources; an increase in earmarked State transfers, which obviously makes local authorities more dependent on central governments; and a lack of consultation between national and sub-national levels. The tendencies we have identified are symptomatic of a decline of the principles of local self-government which, until a few years ago, were widely implemented in our member States. I believe we should be worried about these developments.

From my own experience in this matter, I am convinced that decentralisation is directly linked to strong interaction and co-operation among all stakeholders involved in the process, as well as between the parliamentary commissions and local government representatives. We have to focus on the quality of that interaction. We need mutual respect between all actors, effective consultation, openness and transparency, and a spirit of multi-level governance. Consultations give local authorities a better understanding of the responsibility of parliaments and governments for the whole public sector. We need to talk more in order better to understand our respective needs.

National parliamentary committees that have mandates to adopt national regulatory frameworks on local self-governance are key actors in the consultation process. Unfortunately, national legislation rarely encourages parliamentary committees to organise such consultations. Governments submit most legal initiatives to the legislature, so parliamentary bodies might assume that the necessary consultations have already taken place in the preparatory stages. However, that is too often simply not the case. We have to ask ourselves this: what offers better consultation mechanisms with the people and their elected representatives at local and regional levels than parliaments – the houses of the citizens? The essence of a parliament is public deliberation of arguments, public debate, public discussion, consultation, openness and a lot more. I suggest that parliamentary committee rules of procedure should include specific provisions on the organisation of consultations; public hearings with local authorities; the subject of the consultation; the procedures and timeframe; and the participants in the process.

I encourage national associations of local and regional authorities to draw up memoranda of understanding with their national parliaments and line ministries. These memoranda could provide guidelines, spelling out further details of consultation processes and the operational modalities of the application of the right to be consulted. We have done a lot of work on this very subject this year. I am pleased to announce that, at our next session in the local chamber on Thursday 8 November, my colleague Anders Knappe will present new guidelines on the right of local authorities to be consulted by higher levels of government. It is no coincidence your new general rapporteur, Jean-Pierre Grin, has agreed to speak at this same debate.

The local dimension has a special significance, since it is the one that is closest to the people and has direct contact with them. If we manage to achieve transparency at local level, it will be easier later on to translate that way of working to the national level.

The European Charter of Local Self-Government remains a key convention in its field – it is a unique legal instrument for safeguarding and developing local democracy in our member States and beyond. The Committee of Ministers has entrusted the Congress with the monitoring of the charter, which continues to form the basis of our dialogue with national governments. During monitoring missions, we have come to appreciate the central role that parliaments often play in designing, developing and guaranteeing decentralisation processes.

I always remember that the Congress has its origins in this Assembly – it was the initiative of a French Prime Minister, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, in 1957. Your Assembly was already very much aware of the need to focus on local and regional governance levels. I see the genesis of the Congress as a logical link between our two institutions, which can clearly co-operate on a number of subjects. Democratic governance happens at more than one level – democratic governance is multi-level governance.

We in the Congress, and our mayors and council members, need our MPs as much as they need regionally elected representatives to carry out successful decentralisation policies that meet the needs of our citizens. It is through that synergy that we will succeed to strengthen democracy in Europe and counter the

temptation to recentralise, which would be nothing more than a backward step. That requires daily attention from all of us because democracy will not protect itself.

I thank the rapporteur very much once more for preparing this excellent report.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you very much Madam President. That was a very interesting speech for our members.

We now come to the list of speakers. I call first Mr Goncharenko.

Mr GONCHARENKO (*Ukraine, Spokesperson for the European Conservatives Group*) – I thank the rapporteur for doing a very good job. Decentralisation is an important issue, which is why subsidiarity, the core principle of decentralisation, is one of the general principles of European Union law. Decentralisation and the principle of subsidiarity tell us that decisions on political and social issues should be made as closely as possible to citizens. It is a strong and clear idea. Who knows better what to do on education, healthcare, social care and urban planning if not local government and local communities?

That is why in Ukraine, immediately after the Revolution of Dignity, we started the reform of decentralisation. As the secretary of the Ukrainian Parliament's committee on regional policy and local government, which is directly responsible for the reform of decentralisation, I want to tell you that this reform is extremely successful – one of the most successful of the reforms that Ukraine came through during the past years. For me, this is extremely important, because I was also a member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – I worked there for several years. It was an honour for me. We need to work together with the Congress in order to provide further decentralisation and not re-centralisation, as you mentioned.

I want to give you some numbers from Ukrainian experience. For example, in my native Odessa region, two very important towns from the northern part of our region, Podilsk and Balta, changed the rate of taxes on incomes from 50 million hryvnia to 180 million hryvnia and from 20 million hryvnia to more than 100 million hryvnia – more than five times more. In Odessa, the capital of our region, the budget was 3.5 billion hryvnia in 2014 and this year it is almost 12 billion hryvnia. This is very important because financial decentralisation is the core point. When we want to give local communities responsibilities, we need to give them the tools to do something. That is why it is so important to work in this area.

I encourage all my colleagues from national parliaments to work on decentralisation. I am ready to share the experience that Ukraine has in this area. I ask you not just to stop with the implementation of legislation. That is extremely important – it is the first issue for a parliament – but scrutiny of what is going on after adopting legislation is also very important. We all know that national executives like to centralise, in all the countries of the European continent. That is why we need to provide scrutiny over what is going on, and then we will really have the right result: effective governance, democracy and the rule of law on the local level. This can be done by decentralisation. I encourage all of you to work in this area.

Ms RODRÍGUEZ HERNÁNDEZ (*Spain, Spokesperson for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*)* – I thank the rapporteur for this report. I welcome the president of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. Our group is not in agreement with some elements in the prologue that concern my country. However, I would like to say very clearly that we shall endorse this report.

In all decentralisation, you have two premises – the law and the freedom of our citizens. These are covered by our constitutions. We need to protect the rule of law. That means that we have to protect human rights and the individual rights of every citizen. The citizen must be at the very core of public policy, and this must have a direct impact. The person must be at the very core of decentralisation. There is a distance between political decisions and the citizenship. Decentralisation helps to fill this gap. For a country to work properly in a decentralised fashion, it must make very clear what are the competencies and the powers of the different levels of government and regional, local and central levels. In this way, we know whether a project can be implemented properly. As liberals, we believe that public policy must ensure equal opportunities for all our citizens. This is why we need to have mechanisms that will make sure that when policies are not implemented properly they are readjusted and applied properly. I have submitted an amendment to try to make sure that a decentralised State will not intervene in all areas. Every citizen must have the right to have access to health and education. We must make clear the balance between decentralisation and the rights of each citizenship to access to public services.

We need to have efficient management of public resources so that we can be close to our citizens, but that is not an end in itself. We are here to protect human rights and the freedom of each and every citizen, and to defend the rule of law in every country, because our constitutions and our legislation

guarantee that. Our citizens must have equality but they must also have the same social protection and legislative protection. Once again, I thank the rapporteur. Our group will certainly endorse this report.

Ms GORROTXATEGUI (*Spain, Spokesperson for the Group of the Unified European Left*)* – In a decentralised State you can certainly better manage public funds. At another level, decentralisation makes sure that the different nations can make sure that their needs are met. It allows them also to participate in a political common project that goes beyond one's cultural group and one's nation. This is what happens in decentralised States. But is true that there are weaknesses: sometimes it does not work well and there are problems.

Why do we have these problems? It is mostly due to the fact that there is a distance between legal reality and social reality. This gap exists when there are no appropriate legal frameworks that will help to resolve the problems and conflicts that are created in decentralised States. There is no matching between the ideology that is a theoretical model and the instruments that are provided so that we can truly apply autonomy. When there is such a distance or gap, we often see that, when a conflict explodes, two legitimacies come to be at loggerheads – the democratic and the legal realities. When the decentralised State disappears, power is taken from the citizenship and the nations do not see their wishes for self-government fulfilled; they are not integrated in the common project that exists. We need to reflect on the ideology behind opting for a decentralised State and consider which measures are provided to resolve the conflicts that appear in local autonomies.

Ms FILIPOVSKI (*Serbia, Spokesperson for the Free Democrats Group*) – On behalf of the Free Democrats Group, I thank Mr Leite Ramos for his report. Parliaments, in their legislative and supervisory role, should, through the adoption of good laws and their application, encourage the decentralisation of municipalities. Financial decentralisation and the constant reform of municipalities affect their efficiency, professionalism and modernisation as a citizen service.

In my country, Serbia, the legislative framework has significantly changed in recent years to increase the transparency of the work of municipalities and to ensure greater citizen participation in the decision-making process. The basis of every reform is the citizen, so we always need to listen to their needs at a parliamentary level. Among other laws related to decentralisation, Serbia passed the law on the National Academy, which aims to introduce systematic training for municipality officials. In addition to the decentralisation of municipalities, the fight against corruption is very important, and digitalisation is also crucial given that today, it is a prerequisite for efficiency.

Ms MUÑOZ (*Spain, Spokesperson for the Group of the European People's Party*)* – I welcome parliamentarians here – this is the first time that I have addressed the Chamber. I do so not only as a member of the EPP, but as its spokesperson.

We always put the person at the centre of everything, and this report deals with the rights of the person. I congratulate the rapporteur on the report, even though we have some differences in respect of what he said about the situation in Spain. Globalisation is not incompatible with decentralisation. Citizens have rights, whether they live in a big city or a small village. Decentralisation brings basic services such as education, health and transport nearer to them and Spain is one of the most decentralised countries in the world, so it is important for me to mention a few things in explaining our support for the report.

We need control mechanisms to make sure that decentralisation does not mean that we are in confrontation with our citizens. Recently, we have had a secessionist movement in Spain, simply because people do not properly understand decentralisation. However, our constitution has control mechanisms. There is a division of power and that guarantees that the rights of citizens are not undermined.

I want to make a very important point on decentralisation. We have had 40 years of decentralisation in Spain. It has been a real success, and some of my colleagues have spoken about that. Despite the risks involved, the situation is good. I come from Castilla y León, which is one of the largest regions. It has 2 million people. Some live in small municipalities with between 40 and 200 inhabitants. We needed to bring public services closer to people and because of decentralisation, we have the best education in Europe in Castilla y León and extremely good health services. That would not have been possible without decentralisation.

In conclusion, if the objective of decentralisation is to improve people's lives and not to create a national identity and so on, and if it is used to move society forward and improve things tangibly, I encourage you to support decentralisation in your respective countries to improve the lot of your citizens.

Mr SCHÄFER (*Germany, Spokesperson for the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group*)* – Madam President, dear colleagues, and Mr Leite Ramos and Ms Mosler-Törnström, we are discussing an important report. In categorising it, we have to realise that on the one hand, people are affected by globalisation and that they therefore live in a more centralised way, but on the other hand, they have a greater longing for a sense of home and for a feeling that they are in control of their situation. We must realise that centralisation in States is not necessarily undemocratic, but that all undemocratic types of State are indeed centralist, and the report lies between those points. The proposals and analysis in it are shared by my group.

If we consider strengthening regions and municipalities and the particular responsibilities of national Parliaments, it is also clear that as national MPs and at a European level, we have to try to ensure an equality of living standards in the areas we represent. We have to look at how that can be achieved and how it must be reconciled with local self-government. That means that local people will have their own bodies, concerns, financial resources, rules and representation so that they can shape their own lives. If we look at the practice in certain countries nowadays, we must also acknowledge, unfortunately, that these bodies do not necessarily have the powers that they had or that they need, and that finances tend to be within the purview of the nation State. In other words, we can correct things only to a limited extent at a local level because of the lack of funding.

I point out that many of us who are active in this Chamber as members of Parliament come from having served in locally elected office as well. We might have worked in the local civil service or have been elected locally. It is important that we bear in mind where we have come from and keep in mind the difficulties at a local level as we do our work as MPs. We must also make it clearer to people that local self-government is not the cellar of democracy, but one of the pillars of the nation State in a united Europe. The European Union, the Council of Europe and so on are pillars, but so is local self-government.

When we talk about Europe, we should also talk about our achievements. There are European Union elections next May. All European citizens have the right to participate locally, which is a good thing, but not all countries allow all European Union nationals to participate in local elections. It is important that people can participate because it means they feel involved and in control of their fate.

The PRESIDENT* – That concludes the list of speakers on behalf of the political groups. Rapporteur, do you want to speak now or at the end?

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*) – At the end.

The PRESIDENT* – In that case, I call Mr Soleim.

Mr SOLEIM (*Norway*) – This is a very important topic that sparks a lot of debate in many countries. In my opinion, the decentralisation of decision-making powers and public services must only happen when it is to the people's benefit. If the services are weakened after decentralisation, the whole point is lost. This is not the same as local government giving one area of public services a lower priority or a smaller budget. If you move responsibility for solving services from central government down to local government, central government has to respect the fact that local politicians might choose to provide services differently.

The more public services we can put in the hands of local government the better. When voters feel that a service they require is not properly provided, there is always a shorter way to their local politicians than to their central politicians in parliament. The shorter the distance between the ones who need the services and those who make the decisions the better the public services can become. If the schools, care centres for the elderly or communications systems are too poor, the people have a shorter way to contact their politicians.

In Norway, we have now stated in our constitution that local self-government is a right. Inhabitants now have a constitutional right to decide local matters for themselves. This is an important right, and it is good that it now has this strong protection. In the coming months, my country will also be introducing major reforms at a regional level. We are making the regions larger and moving responsibility from the national level down to the regions. Our experience is that the capital often becomes the location of new bodies created by the national administration, so we have made it a rule that every new body created from now on is to be located outside the capital area, which will also ensure that new and highly skilled jobs are located in rural areas of the country.

Even though decentralisation is important, the most important thing is that parliament ensures a structure of government that helps people and companies wherever they are. If a country has companies

spread across both central and rural areas, parliament must ensure they have good access to public offices and infrastructure that helps them to run their businesses. The people must feel that they have a real say in local matters. It is our job as parliamentarians to ensure that this is in fact happening. Thank you for a very good report.

Mr GOLUB (*Ukraine*)* – I thank our colleague for his excellent work. The 21st century has demonstrated the need to change our governance structures, which first and foremost means public sector governance. The Soviet Union left in its successor States a system of governance based on a rigid vertical system of power, meaning that the countries of central and eastern Europe had difficulty moving towards civil society institutions, democracy and other values.

This has caused problems in a country such as mine, where we need to reform the overall public sector governance system. We have started that process of decentralisation. On 1 April 2014, a strategy for reforming local municipalities and extending power to them was adopted. The Ukrainian Parliament passed a law on this in late 2014 and then in 2015 a law on merging certain municipalities. This was the basis for decentralisation. Four years on, it is the most successful reform in Ukraine and is yielding positive results.

What about the impact of decentralisation on Ukrainians? The devolution of power from the centre to local communities has given an impetus to new projects and given people personal dignity and responsibility for their actions. Ukrainians are putting more trust in local government and are less frequently turning to the central power for recourse, and that makes it possible for local people to develop services that benefit themselves and their children, which has given a strong impetus to the development of civil society in Ukraine.

All decisions are now taken after consultation with local communities, meaning close contact between politicians and individuals and a genuine search for compromise. The decentralisation process in Ukraine is an interesting experience and a model for other countries in the region. It clearly shows that my country is seeking to move from an undemocratic past to a radiant future of mutual respect. It is a responsible and transparent effort to take on international values and become masters of our own destinies. Not all our reforms are yielding results of course – Rome was not built in day – but our work on decentralisation shows that we are breaking with an autocratic and post-Soviet past and moving closer to Europe and a time when liberty and democratic values win the day and take over from perfidiousness.

Mr BILDARRATZ (*Spain*)* – Decentralisation means co-operation, and co-operation means having a positive attitude, which is often in contrast to how institutions are managed at other levels. I thank Mr Leite Ramos and the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities for responding to the call from the Croatian presidency to make decentralisation a priority. Decentralisation puts the person at the centre of all policy making. The institutions closest to the citizen are those most aware of their problems. In respect of education, for example, which is of particular importance to local communities, local and regional authorities can best understand the problems of citizens.

We must also ensure that there is real participation, because institutions need to know what the problems are that our citizens are confronting. The citizens vote for us every four years, but at the same time we must understand what our citizens' problems are. We, as politicians, absolutely must have no fear in putting questions, because otherwise we will have situations where we will grow away from our citizens and we will be far from our citizens. We would not then be fulfilling our objective, because in fact our objective is to represent them in all institutions.

Contrary to what one may believe, the process of globalisation strengthens local and regional authorities, because local government fulfils a mandate. It provides our citizens with services that they need. Two things are truly important: first, we need mutual loyalty. All institutions should show that mutual loyalty, and the law is to be used to apply decentralisation, but there is a bilateral relationship. Some 24% of the participants here are in fact Spanish. Have you wondered why, if Spain is the second most decentralised country, 24% of those who are speaking in this debate represent Spain? It is because there are divergences in our country. There are problems. That must be spoken about clearly. We need to apply the law and we need to have clear competences.

The second thing is financial self-sufficiency. Spain is one of the most decentralised countries, but there is one very important element: the judicial world and the constitutional court. The judicial system is unitary. We need to have a balance among the different institutions so that we apply the law and ensure loyalty. The judicial system must do the same thing, but that is not the case in Spain. Thank you very much for this report, because you advocate that we should get close to our citizens, and that is how we will serve democracy and our citizens.

(Sir Roger GALE, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Ms Maury Pasquier)

The PRESIDENT – The Chair does not like to interrupt speeches, but I really must ask members to keep to time. Otherwise, I may become almost as fierce as Madam President. Mr Özsoy is not here, so I call Mr Xuclà.

Mr XUCLÀ (*Spain*)* – Mr Leite Ramos, I congratulate you on this report, because it reflects your professional experience but is also a reflection of what you have done politically in Portugal. Portugal is a country that is having a debate on decentralisation, and you have encouraged that particular debate in your country.

We have talked about what was not working in Europe after the First World War and the Second World War and we have dealt with different aspects. It is obvious that after the Second World War the founding fathers based everything on subsidiarity, but the Weimar Government, for example, had the possibility of finding alternatives. I wonder whether we should take inspiration in this Assembly from what happened in the Weimar Republic. After the Second World War we talked about co-decision and subsidiarity, which have been taken up by different countries. That provides public services such as health and social services, and it allows you to be close to the citizens.

There is also the principle of accountability, because local authorities are held accountable vis-à-vis their citizens with regard to the services they provide. Citizens can clearly say something about how healthcare or education is provided and say, “This model is better than the other,” so there is competition between the services that are provided. That is certainly improved by a decentralised system.

I belong to the 24% of speakers that Mr Bildarratz mentioned. Paragraph 50 of this report refers to the situation in Spain and reflects what is happening there at the moment. This is an appropriate time to talk about it. I would like to underline something that was said before and with which I agree: democratic legitimacy must be harmonised with the legal framework. When a certain political will is expressed through the ballot box, then it should be democratically taken into account, be it an agreement between parties. That is what I would like to underline, because I respect my colleagues who have spoken in a different way.

I repeat my thanks. We have 47 member States. Switzerland and Spain are good examples of decentralisation and it is a good thing that Portugal, which is a unitary State, has started this debate in our Parliamentary Assembly.

The PRESIDENT – There appears to have been an administrative error, and Mr Murray’s name has inadvertently been withdrawn. I will call Mr Simms, but then – just to put you on stand-by – I will give you the floor, Mr Murray. From Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr Scott Simms.

Mr SIMMS (*Canada, Observer*) – Thank you very much, Chair; I appreciate the shout-out to my home province. For anyone who is wondering, Newfoundland and Labrador is in Canada. Thank you for inviting me into this particular debate. It is very important. First, I thank the rapporteur; this is a fantastic report. I also thank the President of the Congress, Ms Mosler-Törnström, who did a fantastic job and said all the right things. I say that sincerely, because in my country it is a different kind of problem.

Whenever we travel through Europe we hear about strife and tensions, and that is dictated by the fact that, as many people like to tell me, “There’s just too much history.” Where I come from, there is just too much geography. We have the second largest country in the world and we only have 37 million people; we do not have a deep history, but we certainly have a lot of people spread over a very wide area. That said, when Canada started officially in 1867, we came in as decentralised, so we are coming at this argument backward. We had four distinct regions that came in together and joined together to form Canada. In doing so, we had delineated powers from the British North America Acts that were very strict to begin with. Over the years, Ottawa – the Government of Canada – started to draw that power in, but the courts helped us out and the provinces retained most of this power all the way up through.

In the next part of my speech I will talk about an example of just how decentralisation works. In our experience, it is not just decentralisation in name only. It is one thing to set up a legislature, an administration, a building or a bureaucracy. That is all fine, but you have to devolve essential power – the power through which you can tap into your own resources. We have a saying in Newfoundland and Labrador. When it comes to resources, whether that be forestry, fishing, farming or oil and gas – no matter what it is – the principal beneficiary of that resource should be the person living closest to it. That essential ownership is the responsibility of the government.

I have an example. Alberta, a province in western Canada, has oil resources on its land and so that province reaps the benefits of the royalties – a tremendous amount of money. There are many countries in the world that are rich because of oil and gas. Our country is one of those, and it is particularly true in the province of Alberta. Newfoundland and Labrador also has oil resources, but they are in the ocean, just offshore, which is therefore a federal responsibility. We fought for years so that we, as Newfoundlanders, could be the principal beneficiary of that resource, and we won that fight in the 1980s. That, to me, is decentralisation that works.

I commend my colleagues from Spain, who have a fantastic decentralised system, but one of the things that you have to watch out for in decentralised areas, especially when it comes to asymmetrical federalism, is that regions or towns do not go off wildly in different directions.

In Canada, health care is brought to you by the provincial governments – the closest level of government to the hospital is in charge. However, the Canada Health Act tells the provinces that they can do what they want as long as they abide by the principles of universality and access. Without that, you have lost the idea of good health care, which is a good Canadian principle.

My friend, Ms Muñoz from Spain, made a point about globalisation meaning that we pull away from decentralisation, which is not true. Let me leave you with this thought. Globalisation and technology will allow the smallest community in the remotest area to finally be a world player. Technology gets them there, but good local governance allows them to be world players.

Mr MURRAY (*United Kingdom*) – I congratulate the rapporteur on what is an excellent report. It throws up a lot of issues that we discuss regularly in the United Kingdom. As our friend from Ukraine said at the start of the debate, subsidiarity is a great European tradition.

At the moment, we are all living through a time in politics of great public disenfranchisement, and great distrust in politicians and governmental structures. That is giving rise to both an extreme right and an extreme left, right across Europe, which we must take cognisance of.

We all have a responsibility when we gain power to immediately give that power away through decentralisation and devolution. Paragraph 62 of the report says, “I am convinced that the success of decentralisation depends to a great extent on the way in which it is done.” That is key, and I have two examples.

The first is how the United Kingdom decentralised in 1997. The new Labour Government at the United Kingdom level had a commitment to devolve power to the nations of the United Kingdom in the form of assemblies for Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. That was hugely successful and subsequent legislative transfers make the Scottish Parliament, a devolved Parliament, one of the most powerful in the world, just slightly behind the Swiss cantons and the Canadian provinces.

Subsequent decisions made by the Scottish Government in the Scottish Parliament take power away from Scottish local authorities, which essentially means that Scottish local authorities are just an administrative arm of the Scottish Government. They have been removed of any ability to raise taxation or to put their own policies in place around education, health, social care or any of the big social issues that we all have close to our hearts.

If decentralisation is not done well, it is a mess. The Scottish Government is very good at talking about the powers it does not have, and at putting together a policy programme for powers that it will never have, but is very poor at using the powers it does have. Unless decentralised governments and devolved parliaments can really show the people they represent that they can use the powers that they have in their hands to make lives better, decentralisation is made very difficult.

The second example is the City of Edinburgh Council, the council in the area I represent. It decentralised a lot of power to local neighbourhoods of around 7 000 or 8 000 people. What it did not do was to give any cash resources to those neighbourhood partnerships. They were left with decision-making powers over very small items. The public who were involved in those decisions quickly realised that they had no real power and the decentralisation was for the responsibility, but not the accountability. We have to make sure that, when it happens, decentralisation happens well. Otherwise, we run the risk of the very essence of decentralisation being undermined by the people who wish to decentralise.

I very much welcome the report. I feel that decentralisation is going backwards, and that governments are centralising more, particularly in times of crisis. I hope that the report goes some way to

explaining some of the issues around decentralisation, including why it is our responsibility as central government politicians to win power for the public and then to immediately give that power away.

Mr LOPUSHANKSKYI (*Ukraine*)* – I thank the rapporteur for the comprehensive report. Taking into account the clear European aspirations of Ukraine, and in order to ensure sustainable development on a regional level, it is necessary to create an effective system of local government. In terms of the reform of our decentralised government, there is a significant deficit of highly skilled management staff for local government, particularly for village and town councils. The optimal functioning of the system of public administration and local government directly depends on how efficiently the staff development of those bodies is carried out, taking into account prospects for development.

In terms of the decentralisation of power and the improvement and development of local government, the main risk is the lack of professional competence of individual local government officials. Inappropriate human resources decisions can negatively affect the state of the whole society and can lead to the population trusting the authorities less.

Following the historic event of the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement entering into legal force, the success of our decentralisation reforms is of great importance, particularly in terms of improving the management and training of qualified staff at local and regional levels who will be able to effectively implement the agreement at local level. That will allow us to meet our obligations on European governance standards. We therefore support the establishment of the Eastern European College of Territorial Civil Service and Local Self-Government for the Eastern Partnership countries, which will be an important step in building a system of effective training and qualifications, with the College of Europe, the first postgraduate educational institution for European affairs in the world. That initiative was included in the final statement and recommendations of the recent meeting of the European Union-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee and has strong support within the Ukrainian Government.

Ms ŞUPAC (*Republic of Moldova*)* – I warmly thank the Croatian chairmanship and the Committee of Ministers for finally identifying decentralisation as a priority. I also thank the rapporteur for a very good job of work.

The Republic of Moldova's decentralisation strategy is an excellent example of how slogans about local democracy are not turned into action. The strategy was adopted in 2012 and was meant to be implemented by 2015, but then the implementation was extended by two years and then by another extra three years, which takes it to 2020. The last time the parliament had any discussion connected to decentralisation was at a meeting of the parliamentary thematic committee in 2015, when it was chaired by an opposition representative. All of our proposals to hold hearings on the subject are rejected by the parliamentary majority, and no one is in a position to tell us the extent to which the decentralisation strategy has been implemented.

The totalitarian regime that has taken root in the Republic of Moldova is subjecting local government representatives to persecution and severe pressure. Dozens of criminal and administrative cases are brought against mayors, and in one instance as many as 76 cases have been brought against a single mayor. That approach continues to be taken. Promises to close cases are used to entice mayors to move over to the party in power. According to our data, more than 600 mayors out of a total of 898 are subject to criminal cases. It is no coincidence that, in the past, more than 600 mayors were members of the Democratic Party but today the figure is only 287. That is all being done, of course, to keep locally elected representatives on a short lease. More and more new laws are putting more and more responsibility on the shoulders of mayors, even though they do not have the levers to implement them, which results in absurd situations. For instance, mayors are now personally responsible for children who have been left without parental care, and a draft law on cemeteries makes mayors responsible for finding room to bury unknown persons or persons who have no family. Many mayors state that there is no incentive for them to stand for office at the next elections. The Moldovan authorities have no red lines, as shown by the result of the most recent falsified elections for the mayor of Chişinău. Those who are prepared to try to continue feel that they have no way to resist other than a hunger strike, as happened at the beginning of the year in elections in the second largest city.

Of course, we support the resolution, but given the current situation in the Republic of Moldova, which is a captive State, it would be naïve to think of the development of any kind of local democracy.

Mr HOWELL (*United Kingdom*) – I thank the rapporteur for this excellent report and for highlighting the importance of decentralisation, to which I am committed.

There is always a tension between the needs of central government to control and those of local government to have powers devolved to it. A number of speakers have mentioned that. Decentralisation is essential, particularly for a country with a developed system of local government. It is essential to make the best use of local government by devolving powers to a point where central government maintains only the overall powers to change overarching policy.

Of course, funding is crucial. In a devolved situation, local government cannot expect to have its hands in the pockets of central government to the same extent. Ways need to be found to establish genuine independence and genuine control over local government's own source of money and to give it the powers to genuinely raise that money and control it. There will, of course, always be a link to central government to some extent, in so much as local government carries out a list of the functions of central government.

At the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development meeting in Lisbon at which we discussed this report, I raised the question of how town planning could be tackled. I was surprised at the reaction it got and at the general agreement that town planning is an area for effective decentralisation. How can the process be made more effective? The answer lies in giving local government, or the people who are engaged in the process, the power and competence to tackle the issue professionally.

The United Kingdom has a system of double devolution. Responsibility for town planning is passed down to individual communities and shared with local government. Of course, there is still tension with central government on the big projects. One of the problems is that when things do not go the way of the communities, rather than engage with the process they seek to raise the issue of what they see as a higher authority, namely my colleagues and me, and they refuse to accept that we do not sit at the top of a great tree of responsibility that tells local government beneath us what it should and should not do.

All of those points are practical examples of how decentralisation can be made to work and the difficulties it will also have to face. The report does us all a great service. It brings out how we need to bring decision making closer to the people. I for one have seen that in action and genuinely believe that it is the right way forward.

Lord FOULKES (*United Kingdom*) – It is a great pleasure to follow my colleague from the United Kingdom, John Howell. We agree more than we sometimes care to admit – we are in different parties – but I must say that I do not agree with him on cuts to local government grants. Local government provides such vital services, including education, housing, care of the elderly, and so many others, but it is being squeezed terrifically by the Tories in England and by the Scottish National Party, who are often called “tartan Tories”, in Scotland. The way in which those services are being restricted is disgraceful.

But that is not what I want to talk about – I do not want to go down that line. I have had the privilege of being a member not only of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, but of the House of Commons and now the House of Lords. I also served for four years in our devolved Scottish Parliament in Holyrood, so I have seen things at both a British and a Scottish level. I have been a strong supporter of devolution and decentralisation, but as Mr Leite Ramos has rightly said, there have been some failures and areas where it has been put on the backburner, and there have also been problems in the United Kingdom.

Devolution is different from independence and separation, and yet separatist parties, such as the SNP in Scotland, use the devolved parliament as a vehicle to try to get independence, but that is not what devolution means. Devolution implies remaining part of the country – the United Kingdom, in our case. Because the SNP is so preoccupied with campaigning for independence, it is forgetting about its day job of providing good services to people, including the elderly and young people, in Scotland.

Another problem we have had – this is mentioned in the report and it has been raised by Jordi Xuclà from Spain – is the quasi-federal, asymmetric system. The United Kingdom has rightly given devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but there is a democratic deficit because there is no proper devolution to England or its regions. Some attempts have been made, including ad hoc measures to London, groups of councillors working together and the so-called northern powerhouse – although it is not a powerhouse in any sense – but none of that is satisfactory, because it is neither coherent nor comprehensive.

Some of us have been arguing for some time that just as Scotland had a Scottish constitutional convention, which drew up the blueprint for the Scottish Parliament, so we should also have a United Kingdom constitutional convention to draw up a federal structure for a federal United Kingdom. In Scotland, it was not the government who drew up that blueprint, but the opposition: the Labour party, the Liberals, the Greens and civil society. I am saying to my leader, Mr Corbyn, and others that we can do this in opposition. If the Tories are not prepared to do it, then Labour should do it. Then, when we are in government, we can

implement that and produce a fully federal system, which is the only way we will have stability and security within our United Kingdom.

Mr REISS (*France*)* – I thank the rapporteur for his work on a subject that has a significant impact on the lives of our citizens and their rights – the success or failure of the decentralisation process. It is sad that the Chamber does not have more people in it for this debate, which is on a subject that is very important for the future of our democracies.

Various territorial reforms have been implemented in Europe. Often under the pretext of better taking into account the consequences of the crisis, governments have promised to achieve economies of scale and administrative simplification. In actual fact, those processes often result in what we in France call Jacobinism, which is financial and administrative recentralisation. It weakens the proximity between citizens and politics.

In France, the most recent reforms have resulted in more and more *métropolisation* and the merging of regions, which does not respond to the wishes of citizens or elected representatives. *Métropolisation* results in politics being recentred on the urban centre, whereas decentralisation had made it possible for rural areas and small towns to come more to the fore. *Métropolisation* is often presented as advantageous for the economy and for society, but each metropolis is polycentric and segmented between different communities who engage in navel-gazing. The merging of regions results in historic regions being replaced by mega-regions, which does not result in economies of scale because administrations are sometimes duplicated rather than merged. That does not result in effectiveness or greater transparency.

Everywhere in Europe, we are seeing more reductions in the payments made to local communities. They are expected to do more with less, which is very difficult as the crisis we are facing is resulting in greater social need, rather than less. The central State often assigns more expertise and competencies to local communities, but without the funding. The attachment of citizens to their geographical areas is at the heart of the success of any decentralisation process. The recentralisation of France may result in less commitment of citizens to local life and, in particular, an increase in abstention rates at elections. In certain regions of France, as elsewhere in Europe, there is a growing tendency to call for local autonomy or even independence.

In the first decentralisation in the 1980s, the idea was to make local administration more effective and closer to the decision-makers to show that the economy of a country does not depend only on the national economy, but also on local dynamism. The idea was that there should be national unity that is freely chosen, rather than the imposition of administrative uniformity. In that regard, I believe that parliamentarians are very responsible, because they are elected geographically. They have to be accountable to their electors. If we truly decentralise, we will give confidence back to citizens. They will believe in democracy and politics. We are experiencing a growth in populism and communitarianism, and I am convinced that the success of decentralisation is crucial if we want our values to win the day.

Mr KITEV ("*The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*") – First, I congratulate Mr Leite Ramos on this successful and crucial report. Decentralisation is presented as a concept of governmental organisation and a method of managing government. Legal traditions, the institutional structure of government, the tax system, the available human and financial resources and the status of development all influence the decentralisation process. The discussion on decentralisation has to differentiate more between short and long-term processes. The key issues addressed in the report include the major issues of decentralisation and the influential factors. For a crisis of representative democracy, the medicine might be decentralisation, local self-government and, in particular, direct democracy.

All 47 Council of Europe member States have ratified the European Charter on Local Self-Government, which shows that local democracy has become a shared European value. Today, local governments across Europe face growing nationalism and populism. It is a new challenge for democratic political structures that have a commitment to a balanced distribution of power. De-concentration, devolution and fiscal decentralisation remain the main components of the decentralisation process. When applied, they can help consolidate democratic processes.

Strong local and regional democracy always brings greater democratic security for citizens. In my country, the Republic of Macedonia, the parliament, together with the Association of the Units of Local Self Government, plays an important role in each area by adopting relevant legislation, promoting public debate and ensuring scrutiny of government policies, actions and spending. That role needs to be further strengthened and made more sustainable.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, it is a good time to examine a cross-section of the experiences across Europe so that we can confirm once again that the decentralisation process is the most successful method for having a well-organised, democratic and market-based society.

Mr ROCA (*Spain*) – I thank Mr Leite Ramos for his report, “The role of national parliaments in successful decentralisation processes”. I am a Catalan from the Spanish delegation. I have been an elected member of my town hall and my regional parliament, and I now serve in my national parliament. I have worked at all layers of a decentralised State. Spain is one of the most decentralised democracies in the world. It has a history of success, but as a previous speaker said, some 25% of speakers in this debate come from Spain. That is because we have been there, done that. We can share the glitches we have seen in building a decentralised democracy.

First, when the responsibilities for spending and taxation lie with different bodies, you may find irresponsibility in spending, leading to growing deficits and huge debt. To avoid irresponsibility, you have to be able to know where spending is and where taxation must be. There must be a clear division of competencies, otherwise you end up in the constitutional court trying to determine who has the responsibility. That makes the constitutional court like a third legislative body, which is not desirable.

Another issue that has been of concern in Spain and especially in Catalonia – you will have heard the news – is when there is no loyalty in one part of the decentralised State. In a globalised world, local identity is very important for people’s welfare. The problems come when a regional government builds an identity that is set against other regions, the national State and other members of the community, such as in the case of Catalonia. They use supremacism, which everyone should condemn, lies and fake news. We have seen something similar with popular movements trying to blame the European Union for the bad things that are happening due to the economic crisis. Reality came to tell them that they were lying.

This October, Catalonia has witnessed some worrying events. When you try to shut down people’s worst feelings and blame someone else for your responsibilities, that leads to frustration. The Catalan Parliament has been closed for four months, from the inside, so the opposition has been able to have no democratic control and there has been no accountability. We have seen the same nationalists on the outside use violence. There are those who claim that there should be a plural Spain but deny a plural Catalonia, which it is. There is a social and political movement called Tabarnia that is systematically denied any voice or dignity, or even the right to exist.

The report is about the role of national parliaments in the construction of the centralised State. The national parliament in Spain called the nationalist Catalan parties to it to talk. Then the democratically elected members made a decision that the parties did not like, so they disobeyed it. It was not only the national parliament but the courts, with several warnings – the law.

When you blame someone else for your problems, you do not do what you have to do. The Catalan nationalist movement should go to the national parliament to talk, but it does not want to because it closed the door to dialogue and politics. In doing so, it broke the Spanish Constitution and our autonomy.

Mr BÜCHEL (*Switzerland*)* – As you said, Mr Roca, a lot of the people speaking today are from Spain and we can see why, given your country’s discussion on decentralisation.

I congratulate all those responsible for this excellent report. It is important that we discuss it and, if we are serious about it, we should do everything that we can to ensure that decentralisation happens and is promoted in our member States, and that we are more responsive to local needs. That would be a great thing in the history of this Chamber. I very much agree with Mr Soleim from Norway on that. It increases the trust of people in State authorities and, where necessary, can be used to re-establish that trust.

I come from a country that is very decentralised by its nature. I am convinced that Switzerland is thriving because it has the local authority and the canton – it is like a province – and only then do things get dealt with at national level. Mr Simms from Canada made a good point about how his country works. The principle of subsidiarity is part of the DNA of our country, but that is not the decisive factor; there is also democracy and the rule of law.

We politicians seem to have more to say the further we are from our citizens, as Mr Bildarratz said. It is hard for our ego if we have nothing to say, but for citizens it is a blessing. I am glad that all 47 member States of the Council of Europe have signed and ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government;

I had not realised that. The Croatian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers has decentralisation as one of its priorities, which will breathe new life into efforts in the member States. That is really important.

For the last few years, I have had the impression that the processes for decentralisation in certain countries seemed to have run aground, as Mr Reiss mentioned about France. There seemed to be more centralisation, although Norway is clearly a good example of the opposite direction. Let us work together against centralisation and help to build trust in democracy in our societies again. We should all be prepared to hand over power – to give it up – to make things better for people in our countries. If you are in favour of more decentralisation, you know that.

The resolution could give the impression that decentralisation costs money, but the reverse is true. Mr Howell and Lord Foulkes would agree on that as well. You need to tax people where the money is actually spent, so that the responsibility goes with the money.

I call on all of us to do everything that we can to combat increasing centralisation. We need to go in the other direction, and the people in our countries will praise us if we do.

The PRESIDENT – Is Mr Csenger-Zalán in the Chamber? I cannot see him, so I call Mr Waserman.

Mr WASERMAN (*France*)* – I congratulate the rapporteur on producing the report. In our democracies, we need to put in place short circuits between citizens and public decision makers. We can no longer accept there being a buffer between them, so there is much politically at stake. There are many ways to put those short circuits in place, but obviously the proximity of decision making – bringing it as close as possible to the citizen – is probably the best way to facilitate it, although it may not be the only one. It is also an innovative model.

I will share a second conviction with you: at least in my country, the major waves of decentralisation that we have seen in the past are not the model to be promoted. In France, we have often shifted the cursor between a centralised and a decentralised society – between Jacobinism and Girondism if you will, to refer to it in historical French terms. The best model today seems to be differentiation of parts of the national territory. We are in Alsace, what we call the Grand Est, right on the border with Germany. For our young people, jobseekers and good transboundary policies, learning German is important in this territory. Expertise in our neighbour's language is probably less important in south-western France or Brittany. Adapting policies to regions and adapting decentralisation to the specifics of certain territories is already done in some countries. If you put that in place, you can be more effective and have a greater impact.

Thank you very much for this report on a topical and innovative subject. Even if the Chamber is not full to the brim, the subject is nevertheless significant and the Parliamentary Assembly should continue to work on it.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Waserman. That concludes the list of speakers, I call Mr Leite Ramos as the rapporteur, who has seven minutes.

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*)* – I have three points, which I will deal with telegraphically. I do not have a lot of time, but I would like quickly to react to some of the contributions made. I thank everyone who participated; your comments have been useful. The diversity of viewpoints has been striking. Some speeches have been almost contradictory, which shows that decentralisation is a multifaceted subject that elicits a lot of passion and that is experienced very differently in different countries. In some places, decentralisation has not really occurred, and in others it has gone too far or has been badly implemented. I agree with the last speaker that it is a topical and indispensable subject that is central to ensuring that our democratic systems remain healthy.

Let us not forget that the subject of the report is the role of national parliaments in successful decentralisation processes, because our national parliaments are often absent or marginalised in the implementation of decentralisation. Many of the problems that crop up, such as the lack of consistency and the lack of good governance, occur because parliaments are not really involved. The parliaments just enact the law and approve the budget, and then they step back. It sometimes turns out that the resources made available to local communities are not sufficient when certain competences are devolved. That issue was raised by almost every speaker. Parliaments must play a central role in any decentralisation process if it is to succeed, not only by working on a draft law but throughout the whole process of negotiations and subsequent implementation and evaluation, during which shortcomings have to be identified and overcome. There may be holes or difficulties in implementation. There may not be full clarity or transparency on the

devolution of powers or on the division of tasks among the different levels of government, or there may be a lack of resources at local level.

After a national parliament approves the budget there has to be good verification of whether or not sufficient resources are being made available to local communities to fulfil their responsibilities. That is an essential role of the national parliament. We have a duty to demand that both chambers of a national parliament – where there are two chambers – be given a serious role, and we have an obligation to observe, evaluate and steer a decentralisation process and to make sure that it unfolds positively.

If we really want to strengthen our democracies, and if we want to combat demagoguery, extremism and populism, we must bring the level of decision-making closer to the citizenry. We must bring elected representatives closer to our citizens. I know of no better way to do that than decentralisation. If we want to win back the trust of our citizens, we must have local governance that really listens to them, that takes their problems into consideration and that responds effectively to problems to find the right solutions.

Decentralisation is not just a technical issue but a political issue of great importance to the defence of our values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. As elected representatives who represent citizens in national parliaments, we need to work on decentralisation. We want to ensure a fairer, more democratic system that is closer to citizens.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Leite Ramos.

Does the chairman of the committee wish to speak? Mr Schennach, you have two minutes.

Mr SCHENNACH (*Austria*) – I thank Luís Leite Ramos, who is not only our rapporteur but was the Parliamentary Assembly's representative at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities for two years until June 2018. He has done a great job, and now we have his report. From the final words of his speech we can hear how much of his heart he has put into the report, for which we should thank him. I am also thankful for the co-operation of the Congress, Mr Kiefer and Ms Gudrun Mosler-Törnström. Today is Ms Mosler-Törnström's last chance to speak to the Assembly because her presidency is nearing its end. That co-operation will continue, because the Congress can inspire our work and we can inspire the work of the Congress. We should have more connections such as this report.

I also thank the secretariat, which has worked very well over the past six months. We had the hearing in Lisbon at which Mr Kiefer was present. Countries differ from each other. Austria comprises nine States, which declared "We are Austria." The law of villages was enacted in 1849, which gave us freedom as citizens – that is important. I hope the Assembly will support the report.

The PRESIDENT – The Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development has presented a draft resolution to which eight amendments have been tabled. I remind you that speeches on amendments are limited to 30 seconds only.

I understand that the committee wishes to propose that amendments 1, 4 and 5, which were unanimously approved by the committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly. Is that so, Mr Leite Ramos?

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*) – Yes.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone object? That is not the case.

Amendments 1, 4 and 5 are adopted.

We now come to Amendment 8, which is, in the draft resolution, after paragraph 7.1.5. insert the following paragraph: "strengthen the efficiency of public services by ensuring adequate representation of local communities and indigenous peoples in legislatures, including through positive measures, in particular guaranteed seats."

I call Mr Ghiletschi to support the amendment.

Mr GHILETSCHI (*Republic of Moldova*) – The amendment would ensure there is a good relationship between local authorities and central authorities. I also agree with the proposed oral sub-amendment.

The PRESIDENT – We now come to the oral sub-amendment, tabled by Mr Leite Ramos on behalf of the committee, which proposes to replace the words “strengthen the efficiency of” with the words, “improve access to”; and to replace the words “including through positive measures, in particular guaranteed seats” with the words, “on the basis of the principles of inclusivity and non-discrimination.”

The paragraph, as sub-amended, would therefore read as follows: “improve access to public services by ensuring adequate representation of local communities and indigenous peoples in legislatures, on the basis of the principles of inclusivity and non-discrimination.”

In my opinion, the oral sub-amendment is in order under our rules. Do 10 or more members object to the oral sub-amendment? That is not the case, so I call Mr Leite Ramos to support his oral sub-amendment.

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*)* – The oral sub-amendment seeks to clarify the spirit of the original amendment. We believe the proposed wording is clearer and easier to understand.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to speak against the oral sub-amendment? That is not the case. The committee is obviously in favour.

The vote is open.

The oral sub-amendment is adopted.

We will now consider the main amendment, as amended. Does anyone wish to speak against the main amendment, as amended? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*) – In favour, with a large majority.

The PRESIDENT – The vote is open.

Amendment 8, as amended, is adopted.

I call Ms Esther Muñoz to support Amendment 6, which is, in the draft resolution, after paragraph 7.2, insert the following paragraph: “ensure the principle of institutional loyalty is a fundamental pillar in any decentralisation process, recognised and included in the legislation;”.

You have 30 seconds.

Ms MUÑOZ (*Spain*)* – We think it is important to include the principle of institutional loyalty that is included in German legislation. We cannot create barriers to create privileges, and we need to consider people and not nationalistic interests. It is important to include the principle of institutional loyalty in the decentralisation process.

The PRESIDENT – I have been informed that Mr Leite Ramos wishes to propose an oral sub-amendment on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, as follows: in Amendment 6 replace the words “ensure the principles of institutional loyalty is a fundamental pillar in any decentralisation process, recognised and included in the legislation;” with the following words: “Ensure that decentralisation processes take place within reciprocal respect of an institutional and constitutional framework, in consultation with all the parties concerned.”

In my opinion, the oral sub-amendment is in order under our rules. However, do 10 or more members object to the oral sub-amendment? That is not the case.

I call Mr Leite Ramos to support his oral sub-amendment.

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*)* – Once again, it is a question of clarifying the wording to ensure that the draft is clear in all languages. The wording I propose is much more in line with the spirit of the amendment.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to speak against the oral sub-amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of Ms Muñoz?

Ms MUÑOZ (*Spain*)* – In favour.

The PRESIDENT – The Committee is obviously in favour of the oral sub-amendment.

I will now put the oral sub-amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The oral sub-amendment is adopted.

We will now consider the main amendment, as amended.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment, as amended? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee on the amendment, as amended?

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*)* – In favour.

The PRESIDENT – I shall now put Amendment 6, as amended, to the vote.

The vote is open.

Amendment 6, as amended, is adopted.

I call Ms Esther Muñoz to support Amendment 7, which is, in the draft resolution, at the end of paragraph 7.2.1, insert the following words: “stabilising a control mechanism that ensures compliance with transfer agreements among different administrations”.

You have 30 seconds.

Ms MUÑOZ (*Spain*)* – The rapporteur said that the words “stabilising a control mechanism” could create ambiguities in other languages, which could mean it is possible to do away with people’s rights. We can draw inspiration from article 37 of the constitution of Germany. We will accept the rapporteur’s suggested oral sub-amendment.

The PRESIDENT – I have been informed that Mr Leite Ramos wishes to propose an oral sub-amendment on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, as follows: in Amendment 7, replace the words “stabilising a control mechanism” with the words “establishing effective mechanisms of accountability”.

In my opinion, the oral sub-amendment is in order under our rules. However, do 10 or more members object to the oral sub-amendment? That is not the case.

I call Mr Leite Ramos to support his oral sub-amendment.

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*)* – The objective is the same as previously. We believe that the text is clearer and that the final draft will make more sense.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to speak against the oral sub-amendment? That is not the case.

Ms Muñoz has indicated that she is in favour of the oral sub-amendment, and the committee is obviously in favour.

I will now put the oral sub-amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The oral sub-amendment is adopted.

We will now consider the main amendment, as amended.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment, as amended? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee on the amendment, as amended?

Mr LEITE RAMOS (*Portugal*)* – In favour.

The PRESIDENT – I shall now put Amendment 7, as amended, to the vote.

The vote is open.

Amendment 7, as amended, is adopted.

I call Mr Roca to support Amendment 2. You have 30 seconds.

Mr ROCA (*Spain*)* – The amendment would guarantee equality of access to public services for all citizens irrespective of where they live. Decentralisation should not create inequalities of access to public services.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

I call Ms Gorrotxategui.

Ms GORROTXATEGUI (*Spain*)* – The original text already mentions guaranteeing equality of access. Adding the suggested words would prevent each territory from applying its own policy. The amendment would mean that different territories would not be able to apply different policies.

The PRESIDENT – What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr SCHENNACH (*Austria*) – There was a more than a two thirds majority in favour.

The PRESIDENT – The vote is open.

Amendment 2 is adopted.

I understand that Ms Rodríguez Hernández wishes not to move Amendment 3. Does anyone else wish to move it? That is not the case. The amendment is not moved.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Document 14623, as amended. A simple majority is required.

The vote is open.

The draft resolution in Document 14623, as amended, is adopted, with 57 votes for, 0 against and 3 abstentions.

(Ms Maury Pasquier, President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Sir Roger Gale.)

3. Joint debate:

Family reunification of refugees and migrants in Council of Europe member States Migration from a gender perspective: empowering women as key actors for integration

The PRESIDENT – We now come to the joint debate on the reports from the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons and the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. The first is titled “Family reunification of refugees and migrants in Council of Europe member States”, Document 14626, presented by Ms Sandbæk; and the second is titled “Migration from a gender perspective: empowering women as key actors for integration”, Document 14606, presented by Ms Heinrich, which will be followed by presentation of an opinion from the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons by Ms Jansson.

I remind members that speaking time in this debate will be limited to four minutes. The sitting must conclude at 8 p.m. I will interrupt the list of speakers at around 7.25 p.m. to allow time for the reply and the vote.

I call Ms Sandbæk, rapporteur, to present the first report. You have 13 minutes in total, which you may divide between presentation of the report and reply to the debate.

Ms SANDBÆK (*Denmark*) – I would like to quote what my colleague Mogens Jensen said in yesterday's debate about private and family life achieving equality regardless of sexual orientation: "this report is not about abstract, theoretical debates. It is about real human beings of flesh and blood...partners and parents and their children". Let us never forget that.

The subject of this report on family reunification of refugees and migrants goes right to my heart, and therefore it has been a great pleasure to prepare it, but it has also been a great challenge, because I want this subject to go to the heart of everyone in this Chamber as well as in our capitals where decisions are made and laws are passed today which negatively affect so many refugees' families.

I became familiar with family reunification of refugees as a child. I was in Geneva, where my father, night and day, tirelessly worked for the Red Cross after the Second World War, helping refugees and displaced persons to find their families in a Europe still torn apart by the most terrible war mankind had so far inflicted upon itself. So how can we forget that there are today countries outside Europe which are devastated by wars, general violence, and serious violations of human rights? All those persons deserve our sympathy and solidarity. Europeans must not turn their backs on the human suffering of people from outside Europe. We are all human beings with the same rights and needs, such as being able to live together as a family.

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights obliges our member States to protect the family life of everyone, including refugees and migrants. However, most of our member States make family reunification of refugees so difficult that it is almost the same as not allowing it. You will find some facts and statistics in my report. Let me mention just a few examples. France is one of the few countries with high numbers of migrants that does not distinguish between refugees and persons with subsidiary protection. If France can do this, why should other countries, like my own, be afraid to allow all families to reunite? Germany has granted visas for some 300 000 family members to be reunited since 2015. Why is it a problem for countries to admit that this is a fundamental human right and that reunited families are actually of benefit to the host country? I appeal to you and to our governments to respect human rights but also to apply common sense with regard to family reunification of refugees and migrants. We as parliamentarians must make sure that our national legislation is in conformity with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights as well as common sense.

Being in the Palace of Europe, we should not forget two other treaties of the Council of Europe. The European Social Charter requires our governments to respect such social rights as access to health care and housing. Refugees who want to reunite with their family do have these rights. Since 1960, the European Agreement on the Abolition of Visas for Refugees has allowed refugees to travel to other signatory countries for up to three months without a visa. If more member States used this agreement, refugees could easily maintain family unity across borders rather than being compelled to expose themselves to smugglers and irregular paths of migration. At international level, family reunification is also determined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

Obviously, legal rules can only be as good as the authorities applying them. It is therefore essential for us as politicians to create a political environment where family members of refugees and migrants are not treated with hostility. This aspect concerns, in particular, the definition of what is a family entitled to reunification. National authorities should adopt an enabling approach to family reunification beyond the traditional definition of family, which does not necessarily correspond to the multitude of ways in which people live together as a family today. If people have lived together as a family before they were separated by a war, for example, it is not for a national authority to disregard such family bonds and exclude family members from the protection afforded by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

There is much more that could be said, but time is a limited resource. I believe that all of us can easily understand what it means to be separated from your family members. Spouses and children are living in a war zone while you, every day and during sleepless nights, are worried sick about what has happened to them, not knowing whether they are dead or alive. Refugees suffer serious traumas. If, on top of that, you add being separated from your family, integration into your new society will be practically impossible. Let us

work together to prevent such human suffering. This Assembly is the right place to take the initiative, because national parliaments are at the heart of defining national policies in this respect. I hereby submit to you, dear colleagues, my report, with a resolution and a recommendation to our Committee of Ministers. I thank you very much for letting yourself be guided by your mind and heart when voting here, but also when voting in your national parliament.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you very much, Ms Sandbæk. You still have six minutes left in which to respond to the debate.

I give the floor to Ms Heinrich, the rapporteur of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

Ms Gabriela HEINRICH (*Germany*)* – In the past few months, we have seen some great reports on violence against women and on urgently needed protection mechanisms in member States, particularly for female refugees. The intention of the report that I am presenting is different: it looks at how we can support the prospects, potential and participation of newly arrived migrant women in our societies.

Hitherto, the focus of integration has been on men, because for decades, more men have migrated here than women. In the past few years, more men than women have come into our countries as refugees and the integration of men into the world of work seemed to be logical and urgent. However, if our aim is to ensure that newcomers strengthen our societies and if they are to contribute to cultural and economic wealth, we must equally ensure the participation of men and women. Women are an important part of the whole integration process because of their potential, knowledge and experience, and because of their role in families and bringing up their children – indeed, their daughters might have a different idea of how one should live than others might think.

In Germany in 2015, women made up only 30% of the migrants coming in, but the number has now gone up to 40%. The number of women looking for work is also higher. According to an OECD study, women are not tending to participate as much in, for example, linguistic lessons and courses, but they achieve better results. Various studies say that newcomer women tend to have less contact with people outside their family or ethnic group than men.

There are many reasons why women are harder to reach through integration methods and are less visible: they tend to be homemakers who are looking after their children; tradition means that men are pushed forward, whereas women, perhaps through social control, are prevented from doing things; or perhaps they are women who have gone through terrible things that they have still not managed to put behind them. That is why we need to inform women about all their rights and support them in exercising those and realising their potential. I have got to know women who have been the victims of violence – especially sexual violence – but who nevertheless are so keen to learn, get an education and get a job, and to turn their lives around. We must not forget that, of course, some very highly educated women are among the newcomers. For example, there are doctors, nurses and carers, who are so important for the German health system.

There are many approaches in our countries to try to help women to integrate and make it easier for them to participate. In my report, I have included a whole series of best practice ideas, because I think there are some great projects and structures out there. We should take more notice of them and perhaps even adopt them in our countries, as far as that seems practicable.

I undertook two fact-finding missions – one to Oslo and one to Milan – which allowed me to look at the various migration policies, structures and projects being used in these countries. There are projects from Germany that I have been well acquainted with for some time now, including from Berlin and Nuremberg, which is my city. I very much thank all those who have helped me with this report, including, in particular, the Norwegian delegation, who had a lot of time for my questions in Oslo. I also thank the Italian ladies who helped me, and especially Milena Santerini, who was our colleague. The report also includes projects from Austria and the Netherlands. Various colleagues have described projects in their countries, thereby contributing to the report as well.

I thank all colleagues from the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination for their positive and constructive contribution to the report. It was a very pleasant exercise, and while I am thanking people, no report could reach this stage without the invaluable support of the secretariat of the committee. Thank you for your highly motivated and highly qualified support.

There are a lot of different approaches in our various countries to helping women to integrate. They depend to some extent on the differences in our countries. In Norway, a lot more women tend to be in the

world of work than in my country and people are very keen on the integration of women and involving them and getting them into jobs. They invest a lot in the empowerment of women, both financially and in the structures that they provide to support women. Italy tends to concentrate more on advice about health and rights and on projects dealing with violence against women. In Italy, a lot of women leave their families back home in their country of origin and work in domestic jobs. In Germany, a lot is invested in supporting homemakers and their role as wives and mothers.

In order for the projects that I described to be categorised, I have grouped them under headings that make the intention clear. There are some very low-key ideas of how to approach women who are very difficult to reach and who would not take the initiative themselves to reach out. One example is the Mutti-Kulti project in Vienna. Women and mothers are approached directly in playgrounds in parks to offer them advice on, for example, health, leisure activities or German lessons. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to reach these women. Many projects were listed that would strengthen people's awareness and confidence. There were initiatives from women themselves and exchanges of experience. Examples include SEEMA in Norway, the Neighbourhood Mothers in Germany and the Yasmin Foundation in the Netherlands.

SEEMA was set up by a highly qualified Norwegian woman with Indian roots. That network helps young women academics who just need a network to get going in life. They advise families in all sorts of areas, including on daily problems, and they bring along their experience as newcomers. The Yasmin Foundation in The Hague describes itself as a participation centre that helps women to develop their skills. The idea is to get them into education, training, voluntary work or jobs. All sorts of different things are offered. There is a project in Milan that supplies free information and advice to women.

Dear colleagues, in this report many very estimable projects are described that seek to promote the interests of women and motivate women who are newly arrived in a country. All these projects have a lot of experience and provide empowerment, but they are only a small part of what exists out there. It has become clear that, if we want to strengthen women's integration, we need to strengthen equality and women's rights as well as empowering them within the family and outside it. Protection against violence is so important, but it is only a starting point to ensure that newly arrived women in our societies can be successful.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you very much, Ms Heinrich. You have three minutes 45 seconds left at the end of the debate.

I give the floor to Ms Jansson to present the opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons.

Ms JANSSON (*Sweden*) – As a representative of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, I would like to thank Ms Heinrich for an excellent and important report, and I welcome the draft resolution.

Women can and will play a significant role in the process of integrating refugees and migrants, as the report of my colleague Ms Heinrich has shown. It is clear that without the gender perspective there is a great risk that integration will fail. The committee has tabled a few amendments to strengthen an already good report, and I am glad that the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination was able to accept them this morning, although unfortunately it did not vote in favour of Amendment 1. What did we intend by this amendment, which seeks to replace "European Union" with "member States of the Council of Europe"?

It is too easy to blame the European Union for problems that are in fact created by our governments. Germany, where Ms Heinrich comes from, Sweden, where I come from, and 26 other States are members of the European Union, but the Council of Europe represents significantly more member States. In the report, we can find examples from Norway – not a European Union member State. All of us, as well as our governments, have an obligation to take action. The European Union alone cannot do anything on migration law without or against its member States. Several reports and resolutions on migration issues from the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons have demanded that member States of the Council of Europe take action and find common solutions. It would be consistent, therefore, if the resolution were addressed also to those member States.

Finally, I would like to emphasise how important it is that we collect and produce detailed gender-specific statistical data on migration, as on other issues. With the help of statistics, we can find the best and most efficient policies. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Ms Jansson. I now give the floor in the general debate to Mr Bildarratz, who will speak on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Mr BILDARRATZ (*Spain, Spokesperson for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*)* – The ALDE group stands for a humanist sensibility, and that is the spirit in which we welcome these two magnificent reports. The rapporteur said we faced a major challenge but that we had to show heart in the face of suffering. On the subject of empathy and the heart, I believe that these reports have soul – they have feeling – and attempt to empathise with the suffering of others in framing policies. I invite everyone to look closely at the reports and resolutions. Only if you look into the eyes of those who are suffering can you come forward with the right policies, which these are.

What would it be like to have nothing, to be unable to speak a word of the language and to be completely alone? Imagine how vulnerable we would feel and how much protection we would need if we were all alone in a foreign country. We need to be mindful of the suffering of children wherever they are. The first report tells us that the point of departure for any sustainable solution must be family reunification, as the Convention on the Rights of the Child states. It is crucial, therefore, that we implement such policies. The right to live in a family setting is a fundamental right enshrined in European treaties. Unaccompanied minors risk falling into the hands of human traffickers. Family reunification is one of the safest migration channels that exist as it means international protection.

Women have a major role to play here. We will not have genuinely democratic societies without equality of opportunity for men and women. On migration, the situation is even more serious, because women tend to have far less contact with society at large and with family members. Often, they are stigmatised because they are women and migrants – so they are doubly vulnerable. Back home, our local councils and mayors must work on co-existence and integration, and everything they do must have women at its heart. Anything we can do to empower women within the family setting is extremely important. For all these reasons, integration is part and parcel of this debate and women the cornerstone of the whole process. On behalf of the ALDE group, I thank both rapporteurs for their reports.

Ms PSYCHOGIOS (*Greece, Spokesperson for the Group of the Unified European Left*) – I offer our sincere congratulations to the rapporteurs on their excellent work.

The right to family unity is a general principle that derives from the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the European Convention on Human Rights and other legal texts. As far as European Union members are concerned, there is also special reference in the Dublin Regulation providing for the evaluation and completion of family reunification within a strict deadline of six months. Nevertheless, in recent years, certain member States have set obstacles in the way of this procedure and restrictions on the number of persons they accept.

The process for family members from third countries is another important aspect. As the draft resolution points out, the visa requirements in such cases are often a serious obstacle to family reunification and cause applicants to wait for long periods due to bureaucracy and financial costs. For these and other reasons, family members sometimes never receive a proper response to their applications, as they should do under international law. It is crucial also that we address the issue of unaccompanied minors. Member States should guarantee reunification with family members without delay and provide essential protection to these minors while they remain separated from their families and living in the host country.

I would like to mention some of the steps that Greece, as one of the countries on the front line, has already taken. First, it has passed legislation introducing legal guardianship for unaccompanied minors who are asylum seekers in order fully to guarantee their rights and safety during their stay in the country. At the same time, accommodation and access to education have to be considered very important. Moreover, the relevant ministries work together to facilitate family reunification from third countries, taking into account the criteria required under international law. Finally, parliamentarians, as well as the Greek Migration Minister, emphasise in all European forums the need for the implementation of a family reunification scheme without delays or restrictions. In this context, the latest figures for the Dublin Regulation monitoring indicate that the number of family members who were reunified from Greece to destination countries, mainly those in northern Europe, have slowly increased, but remain far below the legal requirements and the real needs on this urgent legal and political, but also humanitarian, issue.

To conclude, with the full implementation of family reunification we should also ask for a permanent relocation and resettlement mechanism for refugees, as it is already included in our previous resolutions. We need to provide collective solutions, based on the principle of solidarity and far from fences, unilateral actions or refusal to accept boats or ships into our ports, which turn the Mediterranean from a sea of co-operation into a sea of death. For those reasons, we fully support the report and encourage all our

colleagues to bring this issue up in their Parliaments and to support, promote and use this legal tool to reach the standards that we must reach.

Ms FILIPOVSKI (*Serbia, Spokesperson for the Free Democrats Group*) – I thank Ms Sandbæk for her report and its conclusions reiterating the urgent need for family reunification of refugees and migrants. The right to family life applies to everyone, including refugees and migrants, and that requires swift and effective family reunification. Without family reunification, refugees and migrants continue their suffering when they leave their family members, especially the most vulnerable women and children, behind in conflict zones, in camps or living precariously, to remain indefinitely as refugees and migrants. They cannot resume their lives and integrate into their host societies.

The FDG urges member States of this Assembly to develop common guidelines to implement effective family reunification that makes provision for non-traditional families, ensures the fundamental right of children to live with their parents and makes no distinction between refugees and persons under subsidiary or temporary protection. Thank you again, Ms Sandbæk, for giving this matter the attention it deserves.

Mr Frank HEINRICH (*Germany, Spokesperson for the Group of the European People's Party*) – I thank Ms Sandbæk, Ms Heinrich and Ms Jansson for their reports, which in my opinion are excellent.

These two reports have at least one thing in common, something that I believe is central to our work here at the Council of Europe: making the most vulnerable the centre of our attention as often as possible. That is one thing we can be proud of, especially in a week where some of us might have had some doubts about our mission.

To the first report, I can say that the EPP group shares the call for more action for unaccompanied children. As much as we welcome the long-standing work of the International Committee of the Red Cross in this context, which you discuss in the report, we encourage greater co-operation between the ICRC, its national bodies, national authorities and Parliaments. Although we might have different opinions or perceptions on some things, there is no question about these points: family life is fundamental, migration is one of the main causes of family separation and the principle of family unity must be preserved and defended as a high priority.

To the second report, when we see and sometimes feel, even this week, the background of the current situation in Europe, we have populists who question Europe's capacity and see the male refugee as a possible terrorist who threatens or is a danger, especially for women, but very little attention has been paid to female migrants and refugees. Thank you for the report. Thank you for teaching me that those numbers are growing. I asked my Government recently and they confirmed that more than 40% of the people coming to Germany at the moment are ladies. Unfortunately, they are only known as the most vulnerable persons in the migration process, besides children; their potential as key actors for integration is not present. I know from my former work as a social worker and later as a pastor that women who immigrate promote the integration of their family and social circle, support their children's education, share traditions with their children and participate in their host country's society. In doing so, they make a big difference, and they could make a much bigger one.

One of the outcomes of this report is that we, as European society, must promote the empowerment of migrant and refugee women by countering all forms of gender-based discrimination. We must learn from our mistakes – we as Germans have made some mistakes that we must learn from – and we must learn from best practice, such as the Nordic model that was mentioned. Thank you for the report, the findings and the ideas; now it is for us to put them into practice and hold our countries accountable, in order to make this Council even more relevant.

I have one final point I want to mention. Female refugees and children have the highest potential to become victims of sexual abuse and forced prostitution. There is a special need for protection, as mentioned in the report; but if you will let me be a little emotional in this place, it is not just protection that we need, although this is a high goal and part of the report. We need empowerment, so that we do not have to talk about this subject again and again in five or 10 years. Both genders have to be included, as Ms Heinrich shared. She stressed that a gender-based approach is pivotal when designing integration policies. Both women from our countries and immigrant women must be encouraged to engage in the policy process, political participation and non-governmental organisation projects as well as the sensitisation of men on this topic. Thank you for the reports.

Ms BAYR (*Austria, Spokesperson for the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group*) – In principle, there are two ways to approach the challenge of migration and integration. One is to focus on problems, to fuel conflicts, to raise fears and to crack social cohesion. That way you might gain votes, but you will destroy societies. There is another way. That way is to focus on opportunities for the peaceful settlement of disputes, to take advantage of the knowledge and experience of those people who have settled permanently in Europe, to follow a human rights-based approach with the goal of building peaceful and inclusive societies, and to reunify families on the run, for instance by helping children to come together with their parents and enabling them to live life together, in peace and legality. That is the way that we, as Socialists, Greens and Democrats, follow. It is the way to provide good lives for the many.

Both the challenges and many solutions to the problems are tackled in these two excellent reports, for which I say thank you. Of course it makes sense to co-operate with female migrants as agents of change and key actors in successful integration; to empower them as multipliers of shared values and respect for diversity; to offer them language education and vocational training; to provide advice on further and higher education and working opportunities; and to support their understanding of the host society, which may not necessarily be similar to their countries of origin. Of course it makes sense to develop an approach based on human rights, and to protect migrant and refugee children, who are among the most vulnerable groups in the world, particularly if they are separated from their parents, and guarantee them the robust implementation of Article 8 of the Convention, the right to family life. To do so effectively, we need a modern definition of what a family is that reflects the realities of people's lives nowadays and the diverse models of cohabitation. We have the legal and moral obligation to use all our means to work for the best interests of the child.

On behalf of my group, I thank Ulla Sandbæk and Gabriela Heinrich for their excellent reports. I am very grateful to have a report that not only focuses on problems but also gives suggestions of how best practice models can be introduced. I hope that those models on how best to engage women in our common integration efforts can be a source of inspiration for our work in all our countries towards providing a good life for everybody.

Mr HOWELL (*United Kingdom, Spokesperson for the European Conservatives Group*) – I congratulate the rapporteurs, who have produced some powerful reports, with a tremendous amount of detail, for which I give them full credit.

In the last debate, my colleague Lord Foulkes said that there was probably more that united us than there ever was that separated us, despite our political backgrounds. This is one area where we can hold that to be true. I agree with the ALDE spokesman, Mr Bildarratz, that the reports have heart. When we consider the details, the issue is deeply upsetting and goes right to your heart. I have seen the effects of family reunification in my own constituency, and it does not need the media to heighten feelings, either positively or negatively. These are stories that carry themselves.

I want to congratulate one organisation above all others for its work: the International Committee of the Red Cross. The painstaking work that it does in many difficult regimes and countries is to be applauded. It does detailed work on tracing and finding children so that they can be reunited with their families. That is so important and I do not know what we would do without the Red Cross providing that service. It is a wonderful organisation.

We have a system of uniting refugee children with their families in the United Kingdom. It refers to the traditional categories of parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, but also to two other categories of people – those who have lived together before refugee status was created, and people in same-sex relationships. That is vastly important.

The trafficking of child refugees has already been mentioned. We are all aware of the problems in the Mediterranean with smugglers but, in my view, we have not seen anything yet from Africa. I am the Prime Minister's trade envoy of the United Kingdom to Nigeria. The situation there really frightens me. If we do not get the economic conditions right, there will be a mass of refugees coming up to the Libyan border. Their first port of call may be Italy, but it will not be the last. We need to get this sorted out and acted on in the best possible way.

I would like to discuss the integration of women. I am conscious that 1 200 women were sexually assaulted over the Christmas period 2016-17 in Germany by 2 000 men. We need to take action to make sure that that does not happen again.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Mr Howell. Would the rapporteurs like to take the floor at this stage? They would prefer to wait until the end.

I would like to make the most of his presence in the Chamber to wish a very happy birthday to our colleague, Alfred Heer. We wish him all the very best.

I give the floor to Mr Schennach.

Mr SCHENNACH (*Austria*)* – I extend my warmest thanks to the rapporteurs for the reports and their contributions. They have put their finger on a very important topic that we all feel strongly about. As has been said, women are often overlooked. That is exactly it. If we look at the trauma experienced by so many people in recent months and years and at the process that refugees have to undergo when they arrive in our countries and have to be integrated, it is far too complicated and, sometimes, far too cynical. Not all that long ago in my country, the authorities made a decision about a married couple. They said that a marriage can be carried out over Skype. The woman was deported. That is contemptuous and completely cynical; it is the sort of behaviour that we should stand against. It has nothing to do with family reunification.

To pick up on Ms Gabriela Heinrich's comments, mistakes have been made in the development of integration policies because they are often far too centred on men. If we are able to integrate women, integration would happen two or three times faster. If we ensure that women are empowered and have their dignity, they can help us to integrate their husbands and children as well. That is what gets me so annoyed about the system. Ms Heinrich gave some examples about that.

Are any of you going to Vienna in the near future? If you are, please book a hotel called Magdas, which is run by refugees. It has given them back responsibility in many different fields. If you book a room in that hotel, you will see how wonderfully it works and how friendly and happy the people are. They have regained their self-esteem. There are lots of women involved in the running of that hotel. Perhaps similar projects could be implemented in Nuremberg or other towns and cities.

The previous speaker thanked the Red Cross. I extend my thanks to the whole team of the Aquarius. The ship, which has no flag, has saved so many women and children but, as a result of pressure from member States, it has to sail around because it is not allowed to dock at a port. I hope the problem will be solved and that the lives of women and children can be saved by Aquarius.

It is vital to provide immediate measures for unaccompanied minors, who should not be placed in refugee camps. The vast majority of them should be cared for individually.

Finally, not that long ago I launched a dramatic appeal for Syria. I proposed a refugee camp for women and children only and that it should be given international protection. That proposal still applies. Several colleagues have said that the European Union should give thought to what should happen to the money invested in Libya. There is a lack of clarity. Perhaps we should start with Libya in setting up a refugee camp for women and children only and with international protection.

Mr BAKRADZE (*Georgia*) – As the report rightly says, Europe is, more than ever, the destination for people seeking protection due to wars and political turmoil, or who are escaping from poverty and extreme hardship. On migration, however, we should bear in mind that it is not only third-country citizens who are arriving in Europe; European citizens from Council of Europe member States are also moving abroad in search of better employment opportunities. Labour migration is and will continue to be an important issue to tackle. No debate on migration can be fully comprehensive without also discussing labour migration from Council of Europe member States.

My country, Georgia, is no exception. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Georgians have moved to other European – mainly European Union – countries, looking for jobs and employment. The high rate of unemployment, low economic growth and the inability to pay back bank loans are the main reasons that force Georgians to look for temporary employment opportunities abroad. Unfortunately, most of them go abroad as illegal migrants, without any legal status or any chance of legal employment.

It has been mentioned, rightly, that the majority of migrants are male. In the case of Georgian labour migrants, however, the opposite applies. According to reports, up to 70% of illegal labour migrants are women, and the absence of legal status prevents them from being able to access basic services such as health care, hospital or even police protection. It limits their ability to travel and see family members and children.

The issue of migration and family reunification in Council of Europe member States is organically linked to the issues that labour migration causes for the citizens of those States. What should be done to

address and resolve that problem? First, we must create legal employment opportunities for those citizens of European countries, including Georgia, who seek them but are currently working as illegal migrants. That would improve their access to basic services, strengthen their protection and increase their income. On the other hand, it would help host countries to obtain a qualified, loyal and educated work force, and decrease the negative aspects of illegal migration. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. The European Union has done it for a few countries, including some represented in this Chamber, and Council of Europe members have also experienced, on a bilateral basis, the introduction of legal working quotas for those citizens who need them, including Georgians. The objective of countries such as Georgia and its authorities is clear – to work with partner countries and organisations to ensure that Georgians working abroad get the same level of protection and rights as citizens of other Council of Europe member States that are not currently members of the European Union.

Of course, the key to resolving the problem of illegal migration is to improve the economic situation and to create jobs and employment opportunities in the country of origin. That is the way we have to go. I believe we will be successful in improving Georgia's economic performance, but before that happens there are thousands of people who need protection, better conditions and their basic rights improved and protected. The Council of Europe has helped Georgia in many areas of development, through years of co-operation. I hope that together, with your help, we will reach our objective. I end by thanking the rapporteurs for preparing a comprehensive and good report.

(Mr Heer, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Ms Maury Pasquier.)

The PRESIDENT – The next speaker, Ms Mikko, is not here, so I call Mr Double.

Mr DOUBLE (*United Kingdom*) – Thank you, Mr President. It is an honour to be at the Parliamentary Assembly for the first time. This is my first opportunity to speak and it is an honour to be able to contribute to this very important debate on one of the biggest challenges facing Europe. Clearly, the challenge is not going to go away and it could become more of a challenge in coming years.

I thank the rapporteurs for the two reports. I do not necessarily agree with every single word, but on the whole they are very good reports that make a positive and constructive contribution to an important issue that we need to address. Every member State of the Council of Europe needs to play its part in that. No one State can solve it on its own; it is clear that we need to work together to find the best approach and solutions.

I want to talk about three particular aspects that we need to balance in order to have an effective migration system, particularly with regard to family reunification. First, as many members have said, the system needs to be compassionate. None of us wants to see families separated, particularly those of refugees, who are at their most vulnerable and need one another more than ever. It is absolutely vital that we have a compassionate system to reunite migrant families, particularly refugees. We must always remember that right at the heart of any system are real people with real lives facing real-life challenges. Compassion has to be at very heart of our approach.

We need to hold that system in balance, however, and ensure that we do not end up with the unintended consequence of creating a pull factor that encourages more people to make that treacherous and dangerous journey, particularly when it means breaking up families. Some might be tempted to send one family member on the journey, but that plays right into the hands of the people traffickers. We need to ensure that our system does not create a pull factor that encourages vulnerable people to make that treacherous journey.

We also need to acknowledge the genuine concerns of some of our communities. I think we all agree that, on the whole, immigration, including of refugees, has had a positive impact on our societies and, indeed, our economies. That is not necessarily the story, however, in every single community we represent. Sometimes we dismiss such concerns as populist views, but we do ourselves no favours in doing so. We have to acknowledge the genuinely held concerns of some of our communities, whose experiences of large numbers of migrants and refugees have not been positive. We need to ensure that the right resources are put in place so that refugees are not only reunited with their families but able to integrate with those communities such that they are embraced by them and feel that they belong.

If we can get those three issues in balance – a compassionate, fair system based on humanity and reuniting families; not encouraging people to make that treacherous journey and fall into the hands of people traffickers; and acknowledging the genuine concerns of some of our communities – we will have a workable system.

Mr ŞAHİN (*Turkey*) – Today, we see migration only through the phenomenon of the displacement of masses, which has dramatic consequences. However, the integration of migrants into society and, looking at it from a gender perspective, the integration of female immigrants, has often been left in the background. I would therefore like to express my gratitude to the rapporteurs for their excellent report and for bringing the facts to the surface.

Migrants and refugees undoubtedly offer great potential and are of benefit to the host country, both culturally and economically. The integration of these people into society should therefore be on the agenda of all countries. However, women are often neglected and excluded from the process. It is therefore essential to help migrant and refugee women by encouraging their participation and investment in the integration process. Through that, future generations will be integrated and the solid foundations that lead to peaceful societies will be created.

I emphasise that the socioeconomic problems of the Syrian refugees who left their country due to war, internal conflict, political oppression and persecution are one of the most important agenda items for the world. In response to that, our project on international co-operation for the rehabilitation and social integration of refugee women in Turkey and in Europe has created an important basis on which partner countries can share their knowledge and experience in this field. Through that, we are not leaving refugee women alone in their struggle to lead their lives. In addition, we aim to disseminate model solutions created to treat the psychological problems that arise from the challenges they are exposed to.

So long as the war continues, large sections of the Syrian population will continue to emigrate to Turkey and many other countries. I emphasise that refugee women have suffered traumas during the civil war due to violence, sexual abuse and losing relatives, which could lead to psychological consequences through their forced migration to other countries. In that context, the project's scope includes a rehabilitation programme that will be prepared for these women. Hobby centres will be organised for their social integration, and they will be offered informative activities on refugee rights.

I am a member of parliament from Gaziantep city, which is located near the Syrian border. Around 400 000 Syrian refugees live there. We have never considered Syrian refugees to be foreigners or refugees. We treat them like our sisters and brothers. We believe that the women of Aleppo are the women of Paris, London and Madrid. We believe that the children of Idlib are the children of Ankara, Rome, Vienna and Berlin. We believe in humanity.

Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (*Iceland*) – I congratulate the rapporteurs on their reports, which are timely and extremely necessary. On the report, "Migration from a gender perspective", I welcome the focus on women and girls. As stated here in this good report, too little attention has been paid to women and their vulnerability or strength when it comes to the ever delicate and hostile environment that people face when coming to Europe to seek international protection or a better life. Women and girls who are refugees and migrants face double threats when they are fleeing war-torn areas or terrible conditions. Many have endured gender discrimination or gender violence or face gender exploitation in the country of arrival after fleeing war or unbearable living conditions. We must face that reality and prevent those situations by preventing and combating violence against women and girls and strengthening women's rights.

In addition, female migrants and refugees suffer from having been separated from their families, which brings me to the other report, which is on family reunification and is so necessary and good. At its core, it says that families should never be torn apart and should not be prevented from reuniting after what is often a dangerous and challenging departure from their country of origin, where their fundamental rights to safety and security were threatened.

All those in a fragile situation – most likely it is the worst situation they have faced in their life – deserve to be shown dignity. Above all, we should not let go of our humanity. We have to hold on to our humanity and contribute to our societies so that they can be a better place to live in, where humanity is held up as the highest value.

Ms ÇELİK (*Turkey*) – I congratulate the rapporteur on her excellent work. The importance of the findings and recommendations in the report cannot be overstated. It raises an often neglected dimension of migration: the need for gender mainstreaming in migration management.

Gender plays a significant role throughout the journey of a refugee or migrant, whether that is their experiences while travelling or what life is like upon arrival in a new country. The policies, programmes and services of all member States must be gender-sensitive to ensure that women and girl refugees and

migrants are safe, their vulnerabilities are tackled, they are empowered and they are able to integrate successfully into their new countries.

While the report provides interesting examples of integration mechanisms in Norway, Italy and Germany, Turkey has a great deal to share on the issue. Today, as the largest refugee hosting country, Turkey hosts around 4 million forcibly displaced persons, including more than 3.5 million Syrians, more than 1.5 million of whom are women. In the handling of this massive humanitarian disaster, Turkish authorities have implemented, in close co-operation with civil society organisations, gender-sensitive policies and programmes for facilitating the integration of refugee women to Turkish society.

The language and vocational training programmes provided at the camps have proven to be extremely successful. Many women in the camps have learned Turkish and established small workshops to produce and sell handcrafts. In the meantime, camp administrators have made sure that women hold leadership roles in the running of everyday affairs in the camps. Participating in the decision-making mechanisms within the camps has helped empower refugee women in their own communities. For urban refugee women, similar policies and programmes have been adopted.

Different tiers of the integration process were designed in accordance with the background, education and career objectives of Syrian women, helping increase their participation in the workforce. Furthermore, the micro-credit provided by different financial agencies of the government has helped promote entrepreneurship among refugee women. All officials involved in migration management and Syrian volunteers are trained extensively on women's rights and gender equality. If the rapporteur had included the Turkish model of integration in the report, it would have made a meaningful contribution to the analysis of the issue and made the report much more comprehensive.

On a more general note, it is especially important to reflect on the situation of migrants given our current global situation. Muslim bans are being implemented and entire groups of people, such as the Rohingya, are being ethnically cleansed. Millions of Syrians have been forcibly displaced as heads of State continue to beat war drums and children as young as 12 months old are held in detention centres at the American-Mexican border.

The integration of refugees, particularly refugee women, to society is never a one-way street. It is a process that entails the preparation of the society in the receiving countries so that attacks on refugees for holding different ways of life, beliefs or cultures are prevented. In many European countries, the current rise of populist parties generates a major obstacle for the functioning of integration processes. Especially in the integration of the women refugees from Muslim countries, the cultural barriers, racial stereotypes, religious intolerance and social xenophobia have become important determining factors, and women are always the first target. It is hard to ignore today that women face more explicit discrimination in many countries around Europe due to their dress and headscarf. The current efforts to end intolerance must take that into account.

We need to think about the potential influence of the rise of far-right groups on the integration process and how to curb it. We need to focus on how the intimidation, fear and attempts at exclusion by those who sympathise with such groups influence the integration process, and on the best ways to resolve that rapidly emerging problem, so that we protect social cohesion and the personal integrity of our communities.

Mr WHALEN (*Canada, Observer*) – I am delighted to be here. I appreciate all the great work that the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons does and these two reports in particular. I sit on the Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, which is undertaking a study of global migration patterns, so in the reports on family reunification and the role of women in migration I was particularly interested in how those factors help to make sure that people are appropriately integrated and settled. That is also an issue in Canada, and I will primarily speak to the report presented by Ms Sandbæk, and my colleagues will speak to the other report.

Family reunification is not a right in Canada, although it is a recognised objective of our immigration and refugee protection legislation. In our immigration system, the government has created a family category that allows individuals to be reunited with their spouses, partners and children as well as their parents and grandparents. Over the past three years, the federal government increased the number of individuals welcomed under that family class from roughly 65 000 in 2015 to 84 000 in 2017. By 2020, through a multi-year plan adopted by our parliament this year, the federal government plans on welcoming 91 000 individuals under the family class. That is under total planned immigration targeted at 340 000 for 2020, which represents just under 1% of Canada's population; it is about 0.9%. Refugees and protected

persons, as well as their dependants, are dealt with in a separate category. That has its own level under our plan, representing about 15% of that 0.9%.

The Canadian and European definitions of “family” are similar. Individuals can bring their spouse, minor children and the children of their spouse to their country of residence. In addition, like some European member States, Canada authorises reunification with common-law partners, adult dependent children and their dependent children, as well as parents and grandparents. The processing times are very long for many of those applications to reunite primarily economic-class immigrants with their parents, grandparents, spouse or children abroad who have been left behind while the workers come to Canada to earn a living.

There is a small amount of migration by unaccompanied minors to Canada. A recent news report stated that only 212 unaccompanied minors landed in Canada in the past 18 months. Those who crossed irregularly at the border are not counted separately from other children, but it is still a very small number. Although I appreciate that many issues addressed in the report remain important in Canada, the problem is not nearly of the same magnitude as is faced here.

In 2017, Canada increased the maximum age for dependent children from 19 to 21, to permit more children to reunite with their families and enable more family members of refugees to qualify as dependants. However, children who are 22 or over may still be considered dependants if they rely on their parents due to a mental or physical health condition. That increase will keep more families together and have social benefits to the family unit and economic benefits to society at large. It will also better address humanitarian and safety concerns for forcibly displaced individuals, especially unaccompanied minors ageing in refugee camps or elsewhere. The rapporteur has noted that there is a severe issue in Europe itself, but most of our unaccompanied minors are those living in the camps. That greatly affects many of my constituents, women who have come to Canada as refugees seeking to be reunited with their family. Our efforts in that regard are good but could be better. Your committee informs the work that we do in Canada, so we thank you for that and for promoting this as a human rights issue.

Ms GALVEZ (*Canada, Observer*) – It is my first time in the Assembly and I am delighted to make my comments. I thank Ms Gabriela Heinrich for the report on empowering migrant women as key actors for integration in the social fabric of host countries. Allow me to continue speaking about Canada’s experiences with immigration and social inclusion.

More than 1 200 000 new immigrants permanently settled in Canada between 2011 and 2016, representing 3.5% of Canada’s total population. The scale is different, but we have other challenges. The majority of those immigrants were women mainly admitted under the economic category, but they also came to our country through the family category to join family members already in Canada, as well as through the refugee category.

Canada recognises that immigration policies and programmes must consider the diversity of needs and vulnerabilities facing all newcomers, whether they are immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers. To ensure a smooth transition to Canadian life, the federal government works in partnership with the provincial and territorial governments, employers, service providers and community organisations to assist the long-term integration of newcomers to Canada. Those partnerships deliver a range of settlement and multicultural programmes, such as language training, employment assistance and programmes for children and youth. Other integration supports include childcare, transportation assistance, translation, interpretation, crisis counselling and provisions for disabilities. Those support services are extremely important for women because, without the offer of childminding, women would not attend the different settlement and multicultural programmes.

Although it is important for countries such as Canada and European nations to integrate newcomers in their societies, it is equally important to provide humanitarian assistance as well as multilateral and diplomatic support to migrant source countries to mitigate the root causes of displacement. That is especially true for source countries of refugees. For example, Canada has been an important contributor to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for more than 50 years and has partnered it in the search for solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons. With the funds received from donor countries, the UNHCR can provide assistance and protection to displaced individuals in addition to relief items and legal assistance.

Migration, forced or voluntary, is not easy. Although certain individuals can find new opportunities, others can be exposed to new or increased risks. That is especially true for those who go through irregular migration channels and fall victim to trafficking or worse. Our migration policies must support the empowerment of migrants and favour the economic benefits of migration, while increasing the protection of

migrants, particularly women and girls. It is important for nations to co-ordinate their actions with key international partners to ensure that we can contribute to the protection efforts for displaced persons, especially for women and girls.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (*San Marino*)* – I thank the rapporteurs for their valuable work.

Often in this Assembly we deal with the recognition and protection of the rights of minors. As we are all aware, in times of social upheaval when there are great difficulties, children and women are at risk. It is absolutely necessary to put together some sort of social network to prevent migrants who are minors from being sucked into the world of illegality, where they become victims. In June we discussed the need for children to grow up in a family environment, and we discussed the issue of removal from social services. We also discussed the role of parents, forced marriages and the trafficking of minors. Families and women both have a role in integrating children.

Many Council of Europe member States are debating the need to address hatred and discrimination. We must protect the rights of families pursuant to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the same applies to migrants. Ms Sandbæk's report cites the need to establish guidelines on the right to family reunification.

Let us not forget that women and children are the most vulnerable in times of crisis. Women are also a good starting point for policies of integration, too. Women have a role in promoting the integration of their family and their social circle; supporting the education of their children; sharing traditions and customs; and integrating into the host society.

I agree completely that the planning, implementation, evaluation and follow-up of integration policies is necessary, and it must be calibrated to gender issues, too. I thank the rapporteurs once again and express my wholehearted support for the reports.

The PRESIDENT – Ms Gafarova is not here, so I call Ms Harder.

Ms HARDER (*Canada, Observer*) – It is a privilege for me to speak in this Chamber, particularly on welcoming and integrating refugee women and girls, on 11 October, as today marks the International Day of the Girl. What better time to strengthen our commitment to facilitating an environment of safety and economic prosperity for all women and girls, including refugees and migrants, within our countries?

Canada shares Europe's hopes of successfully welcoming and integrating women from many different backgrounds, and I will draw on the specific example of empowering refugee Yazidi women and children. These women and children suffered heinous crimes, including unimaginable torture, rape and being sold as sex slaves. Many of them watched their children or their husbands be tortured and killed.

In 2017 several hundred Yazidi women and children were brought to Canada and given a place of refuge. Our intentions were good – to provide a better life – but we discovered upon further reflection and analysis by a committee that further actions were needed to strengthen our process. Canada's integration efforts are supported by both government and non-government actors, and we believe that both are necessary. When the government brought these Yazidi women and girls to Canada, it sent settlement workers to welcome them to the country. They were provided with housing, food, language training, counselling, medical care, financial assistance and professional training. All those things were guaranteed to the women for their first year.

However, we discovered that the intention of offering those things was not enough. Further action was required in order to ensure that not only were the services available but that these women and girls were able to access them and that they were being delivered properly. Newcomers need the help of individuals who are part of civil society. They need friends, members of the community, to help them go to a food bank, to go to a language centre or to understand our culture. They need members of civil society to help them with grocery shopping, doctor appointments, childcare and learning how to drive, how to vote, how our system works and what their rights are. In particular, I have noted that churches, religious organisations and faith groups play an integral role in Canadian society when it came to helping the women integrate and make a life for themselves.

My final observation is on the safety and security afforded to these women. For women refugees to thrive, they must know that they are safe and secure. They must know that they are protected from violence, as the report notes. One young woman was recently on a bus in Toronto when she recognised a fellow

passenger as an ISIS, or Daesh, militant who had raped, tortured and sold her. He was now living in Canada and so is she.

The Assembly passed a resolution yesterday to encourage the reintegration and rehabilitation of radicals who return to their country of origin. If we choose to reintegrate these men, we must also be mindful of the impact it could have on the women and girls who find refuge within our countries. Countries must wrestle with how they balance the rights of refugee women with the rights they grant to her oppressor who is now being reintegrated into the same country. Each country must wrestle with that very real issue, and they must come to a decision. That is particularly true if we are to uphold the strategic objective of the Council of Europe gender equality strategy for 2018 to 2023 on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, which I believe we all intend to do.

It is our collective desire for women refugees to dream, to feel safe, to enjoy freedom, to develop skills, to enter the workforce and to realise their potential. Because that is our goal, their safety and security must be our priority. We must ensure that the sins committed against them in their home country are not committed against them in our homelands, the ones into which we have welcomed them. Only then can women refugees truly heal and truly be integrated.

Mr SANER (*Representative of the Turkish Cypriot Community*) – As the number of immigrants and refugees arriving in Europe increases, ensuring the right to family reunification seems to have become one of our toughest challenges, and it deserves to be addressed diligently by all European countries. I thank the rapporteur, Ms Ulla Sandbæk, for her contribution on this important issue.

It is well known that the absence of legal routes for family reunification leaves people without any option other than turning to smugglers and taking the route over the Mediterranean, putting their lives in danger. As the outermost country on the eastern borders of the European Union, Cyprus is on the migration route. Although the European Union *acquis* is suspended in north Cyprus, our shores are an attractive destination for refugees and smugglers.

As the Turkish Cypriot people, despite limited resources and other well-known restrictions and embargoes, we try to do our part to help refugees who find themselves in north Cyprus on their route to the European Union. We are confronted by challenges relating to refugees on an almost daily basis, and we cooperate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations refugee agency, in maintaining the wellbeing of these people. Our legislative assembly is working on legislation to improve the rights of refugees. However, for an effective system of protection for refugees, we need to further our cooperation and diplomatic relations with European countries.

On 18 July 2018 a boat carrying 150 refugees sank off the coast of north Cyprus. Turkish Cypriot coastguards, together with Turkish coastguards, rescued the survivors and brought them to a secure haven in Turkey. I thank Turkey, which hosts more than 3 million refugees and migrants. A severely wounded refugee was treated in north Cyprus, and he was later accompanied by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to south Cyprus, where his family had already sought asylum.

In another case, the dead bodies of refugees washed up on the shore of north Cyprus. Our authorities were informed by the UNHCR that the relatives of the victims were possibly asylum seekers in south Cyprus. On the request of their relatives, they found their eternal resting place in north Cyprus. The relatives lacked valid travelling documents but were allowed to pass to the north and attended the ceremony conducted by north Cyprus authorities.

In closing, I emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach on migration and refugees parallel to the efforts to protect the rights and address the needs of such vulnerable people. The causes of the problem need to be tackled.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you. Lise Christoffersen is not on the list because she has spoken three times already but, because we have time, we can break the rule.

Ms CHRISTOFFERSEN (*Norway*) – In her report, Ms Sandbæk rightly reminds us of the right to family life as protected under Article 8 in the Convention of Human Rights. Furthermore, the Convention is not for Europeans only, but covers the rights of every person residing on European soil. Thus, Article 8 protects the right of family life for every resident, both permanent and temporary. In other words, safe and regular means of family reunification is part of our obligations under the Convention – many of our member States seem to have overlooked that important point.

In June 2017, our Commissioner for Human Rights published an issue paper on family reunification. His message was crystal clear: “member States have a legal and moral obligation to ensure family reunification. International human rights standards require that people seeking protection, can reunify with their families in an effective and timely manner. States must lift the many obstacles to family reunification and treat all people seeking protection equally.” That goes for both 1951 Convention refugees and people with subsidiary protection.

Nevertheless, country after country is trying to reduce the inflow of asylum seekers by limiting family reunification. The official argument is that the country is fighting smugglers or preventing people from risking their lives on the Mediterranean, but a lack of logic is embedded in that argument. Without safe and regular means of family reunification, more people might try to reach Europe along dangerous routes, including vulnerable women and children.

Yesterday, we debated the danger of radicalisation, and heard that it was partly due to unsuccessful integration. We should bear that in mind when debating Ms Heinrich’s report. In 2016, the Human Rights Commissioner published another issue paper under the title “Time for Europe to get migrant integration right”. It demonstrated through empirical evidence how rapid family reunification leads to better integration, especially if we manage to empower the women. When migrant women are allowed education, and allowed to participate in the labour market, social life, recreational activities and politics, they are even less vulnerable to discrimination, violent abuse, forced marriage and genital mutilation. Women are mothers as well – empowering migrant women means empowering future generations.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Ms Christoffersen. That concludes the list of speakers.

I call Ms Heinrich to reply. You have three minutes and 45 seconds left.

Ms Gabriela HEINRICH (*Germany*)* – I thank everyone for the kind words they expressed on the report we have submitted today. It has been clear from the comments that, here in the Chamber, women are seen as very much part of the system and as relevant players when it comes to integration.

To address the comments of our colleague from Turkey who just spoke, I am fully aware that Turkey is doing and has done a great deal for the very large number of refugees it has taken in. Unfortunately and for many different reasons, it was not possible to get hold of the relevant information to incorporate in the report. That is a pity, but we are certainly not at the end of the process.

Colleagues pointed out that we need to deal with the various forms of migration. The report deals not only with refugees, but with women who have recently arrived in our societies, who need support even if they do not demand it. My colleague Mr Frank Heinrich mentioned our experience in Germany with guest workers – *Gastarbeiter*. A lot of errors are being repeated when they should not be. Women are left outside the process and we focus only on men.

In drafting the report, I have got to know of a lot of wonderful projects – I refer colleagues to the action plan in Norway. From what I can gather, it is about the right to decide things about your own life. How should we integrate women? All such questions boil down to the fact the best form of protection is enabling women to decide for themselves how they want to live, how they want to integrate, and how they ensure that their families are included – that was mentioned by a few speakers.

It is no surprise that Canada, as a country of immigration, has a number of very good examples to draw on. I will certainly look closely at what is happening there.

Colleagues, please do your bit to ensure that women are fully integrated as part of the migration process. Please do more. Look at what is happening. How is it funded? What projects are being carried out? We have talked about some of them. It is very much within our capability. Let us give more attention to this issue. If we do so, things can improve. The report can do no more in the current situation, but this is not the end of the process – far from it – but the very beginning. We will try to improve things in our own countries.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Ms Heinrich. Does the chairperson of the committee wish to speak?

Ms KOVÁCS (*Serbia*) – The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination is proud to present the report. I thank Ms Gabriela Heinrich for her excellent work in this field. As we heard, the rapporteur looked at migration from a gender perspective with a positive attitude. Migrant and refugee women are exposed to severe dangers. They systematically become victims of physical and sexual violence as well as trafficking for different purposes, and in their new surroundings they face prejudice and bias.

Taking a positive attitude, however, this report aims to show us the huge potential that migrants and refugee women have. They can not only develop a new life in the host country but help their communities to become better integrated. The report shows us a multitude of projects and programmes carried out throughout Europe that allow these women to speak, to learn, to work – to create that in their new environment. It tells us stories of migrants and refugee women who manage in life and manage to make a difference. In the work of our rapporteur, women are not only spouses, mothers or sisters – they are persons in their own right. Just like other migrants and refugees, they need assistance to fulfil their potential. For this to be effective, however, the aspect of gender needs to be taken into account. Many women newcomers are not always fully aware of their rights and of the opportunities that are made available to them. Some of them are subjected to traditional roles that limit their ambitions and hinder their development. The text calls on member States to address these issues.

Dear colleagues, I call on you to strongly support this resolution. Its ultimate aim is to make migrants and refugee women succeed. This is in the best interests of all women, men, and European societies at large.

The PRESIDENT – I now call Ms Sandbæk. You have six minutes and 11 seconds left.

Ms SANDBÆK (*Denmark*) – I would like to thank the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, particularly the secretariat, and foremost Mr Rudiger Dossow. He helped me draft the resolution, put together a marvellous panel of experts, whom I would also like to thank, and took me to Brussels, where we met a lot of people who were very clever and gave us a big insight – I also thank them. I thank my colleagues who took part in this debate. I was extremely happy to see that they shared my feeling that this is not about rules: it is about hearts; about men and women who have been separated by cruel wars and have the right to family reunification. It really warmed my heart that everybody who took part in the debate shared my views in that way.

Article 8 gives the right to have a family, but unfortunately it does not say how you can be reunited with your family. There are no rules for member States to obey. How soon should there be a family reunification? What should be the rules of family reunification? Several members said that we need these rules. We need a common departure point. This is very important, because more and more member States are using family reunification rules to deter refugees from coming to their countries. My own country is one of them. All the time we are making the rules stricter. First of all, you can only apply for family reunification after one year, and then when you apply for it, it takes a very, very long time until your application is met. If you are under subsidiary protection, you cannot until apply until after three years. Of course, when you are a refugee, you are looking for the best possible country to go to seek protection – and one of the most important things you are looking for, of course, is to be reunited with your family. If a country makes this virtually impossible, you will not go there. It is really very deplorable that our country is using this very subject to deter people from coming to their countries. I hope that we will have common rules and that countries can no longer use this as a deterrent to refugees. This is really very, very bad.

A lot of my colleagues have talked about unaccompanied minors. This is a very important subject. Of course, we should give unaccompanied minors the best conditions when they are in our countries. But there is one thing that none of us has touched on. I did not touch on it in my report, but I have just thought of it. When an unaccompanied minor is in a country, a lot of the time they will have a guardian. I am myself a guardian of an unaccompanied minor. Luckily he was allowed to stay in Denmark and he has become part of my family. Most of these unaccompanied minors become part of host families in the country where they are. They also have the right to family life, but no matter – when they turn 18, they are returned to their countries of origin, where nobody is there to take care of them, so they get separated from the families in the host countries. This is also not okay. Nobody wants to keep minors from Afghanistan, so some of them come to the host countries when they are maybe only 10, 11 or 12 years old, and when they turn 18, when they have been fully integrated into the country – into Danish families; of course Denmark is what I know most about – they are sent back to Afghanistan, where they hardly even know the language and know absolutely nobody. Most of the time, their families will be in another country and they cannot be reunited with them because they do not know where they are. We should have rules that if you have been a country for a certain number of years as an unaccompanied minor, you should have refugee status and you cannot be returned to your country of origin. This situation is really inhumane.

Those were the main topics of the debate. I thank everybody for taking part. I also want to thank Canada, because even though there are no rules on having to accept family reunification, we heard some impressive figures on how many families were reunited in Canada. This could serve as a great example to Europe, where we are not very good at having family reunification. Thank you so much, everybody. Take this

back to your parliaments and let us try to create the same spirit in our countries as was the main spirit in this debate, from everybody.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Ms Sandbæk. I give the floor to the Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons. You have two minutes.

Mr MUNYAMA (*Poland*) – Thank you, Mr President, and happy birthday to you.

The Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons Committee would like to express satisfaction that Ms Sandbæk's and Ms Heinrich's reports were debated jointly, while Ms Jansson was able to make her own suggestions as rapporteur for opinion on the committee. Combining the texts allows broader scope for discussion and adds depth and perspective to each. I am grateful to Ms Sandbæk for having brought to the committee some interesting input during the preparation of the report – in particular, the hearing with the UNHCR and her contacts with the European Union during her fact-finding visit.

The large-scale separation of families is one of the negative consequences of the recent increases in migratory flows, but split families, and the means used to reunite them, have always been part of the migration equation. Sometimes, when considering this kind of subject, we are distracted by the sad stories we hear and see in the media. Ms Sandbæk's report, based solidly on references to States' obligations, avoids any tendency to subjectivity and superficiality. I therefore recommend this report and ask all you to support it. I thank the secretariat for a job well done in preparing this report.

The PRESIDENT – We come to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons report titled, "Family reunification of refugees and migrants in the Council of Europe member States".

The committee has presented a draft resolution to which four amendments have been tabled, and a draft recommendation to which no amendments have been tabled.

We will first consider the amendments to the draft resolution. I understand that the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 4 and 1 to the draft resolution, which were unanimously approved by the committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly. Is that so Mr Munyama?

Mr MUNYAMA (*Poland*) – That is the case.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone object? That is not the case.

Amendments 4 and 1 are adopted.

I call Ms Brynjólfsdóttir to support Amendment 2. You have 30 seconds.

Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (*Iceland*) – I moved this amendment because refugees often lack the money to pay for the travel costs of a family member. The UNHCR has proposed to establish a fund for that purpose and the signatories support this idea.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr MUNYAMA (*Poland*) – In favour.

The PRESIDENT – The vote is open.

Amendment 2 is adopted.

I call Ms Brynjólfsdóttir to support amendment 3. You have 30 seconds.

Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (*Iceland*) – I put this amendment forward to accentuate the child's best interests, even in divorce proceedings, which often involve a battle over the child's custody.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr MUNYAMA (*Poland*) – In favour.

The PRESIDENT – The vote is open.

Amendment 3 is adopted.

We will now proceed to vote on the whole of the draft resolution contained in Document 14626, as amended. A simple majority is required.

The vote is open.

The draft resolution in Document 14626, as amended, is adopted, with 35 votes for, 3 against and 1 abstention.

We will now proceed to vote on the whole of the draft recommendation contained in Document 14626. A two-thirds majority is required.

The vote is open.

The draft recommendation in Document 14626 is adopted, with 36 votes for, 2 against and 2 abstentions.

We come to the draft resolution on the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination report titled, “Migration from a gender perspective: empowering women as key actors for integration”.

The committee has presented a draft resolution to which nine amendments and two sub-amendments have been tabled.

I understand that the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 to the draft resolution, which were unanimously approved by the committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly.

The committee also unanimously agreed Amendments 3 and 6. However, I must call those amendments individually as sub-amendments have been tabled to the amendments which must be considered separately.

Is that so Ms Kovács?

Ms KOVÁCS (*Serbia*) – Yes.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone object? That is not the case.

Amendments 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 are adopted.

I call Ms Jansson to support Amendment 1. You have 30 seconds.

Ms JANSSON (*Sweden*) – It is important to hold States responsible for their action and inaction. Such responsibility should not be limited to the member States of the European Union, but to all member States of the Council of Europe.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call the rapporteur, Ms Heinrich.

Ms Gabriela HEINRICH (*Germany*)* – I oppose the amendment because we are criticising the European Union specifically for its migration policy here and not the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. At this particular point in the text, we are not talking about criticising the Council of Europe. That is why I oppose the amendment.

The PRESIDENT – What is the opinion of the committee?

Ms KOVÁCS (*Serbia*) – The committee was against.

The PRESIDENT – The vote is open.

Amendment 1 is rejected.

We come to Amendment 3, which has a sub-amendment. I call Ms Jansson to support the amendment. You have 30 seconds.

Ms JANSSON (*Sweden*) – Recognition of studies and diplomas is an objective of the Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. However, migrants and refugees often face problems in having their studies and diplomas recognised in their host country.

The PRESIDENT – We now come to the sub-amendment tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. I call Ms Heinrich to support the sub-amendment.

Ms Gabriela HEINRICH (*Germany*)* – The amendment from the Migration Committee is absolutely correct and we support it, but it is in the wrong place. It should not be under paragraph 8.2 but at the end of paragraph 8.8.

The PRESIDENT – What is the opinion of the mover of the main amendment?

Ms JANSSON (*Sweden*) – In favour.

The PRESIDENT – The committee is obviously in favour of the sub-amendment.

I shall now put the sub-amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The sub-amendment is adopted.

Does anyone wish to speak against the main amendment, as amended? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Ms KOVÁCS (*Serbia*) – In favour.

The PRESIDENT – The vote is open.

Amendment 3, as amended, is adopted.

We come to Amendment 6, which has a sub-amendment. I call Ms Jansson to support the amendment. You have 30 seconds.

Ms JANSSON (*Sweden*) – We would like to insert the words “and violence within their family, including child marriages, genital mutilation and so-called ‘honour killings’”.

The PRESIDENT – I call Ms Heinrich to support the sub-amendment on behalf of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. You have 30 seconds.

Ms Gabriela HEINRICH (*Germany*)* – This is a good amendment – it does improve the report – but we suggest that it not be added to the end of paragraph 8.5 but be a separate paragraph after paragraph 8.5. In other words, it would be paragraph 8.6.

The PRESIDENT - What is the opinion of the mover of the amendment?

Ms JANSSON (*Sweden*) – I am in favour.

The PRESIDENT – The committee is obviously in favour.

I shall now put the sub-amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The sub-amendment is adopted.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment, as amended? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Ms KOVÁCS (*Serbia*) – The committee is in favour.

The PRESIDENT – The vote is open.

Amendment 6, as amended, is adopted.

We will now proceed to vote on the whole of the draft resolution contained in Document 14606, as amended. A simple majority is required.

The vote is open.

The draft resolution in Document 14606, as amended, is adopted, with 38 votes for, 2 against and 1 abstention.

3. Next public business

The PRESIDENT - The Assembly will hold its next public sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. with the agenda that was approved on Monday.

I want to correct something very important, at least for me: my birthday is not today but tomorrow.

The sitting is adjourned.

(The sitting was closed at 7.45 p.m.)

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Draft resolution in Document 14623, as amended, adopted

2. Joint debate: Family reunification of refugees and migrants in Council of Europe member States/Migration from a gender perspective: empowering women as key actors for integration

Presentation by Ms Sandbæk of the report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Document 14626

Presentation by Ms Gabriela Heinrich of the report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, Document 14606

Presentation by Ms Jansson of the opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Document 14630

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Draft resolution in Document 14626, as amended, adopted

Draft recommendation in Document 14626 adopted

Draft resolution in document 14606, as amended, adopted

3. Next public business

Appendix / Annexe

Representatives or Substitutes who signed the register of attendance in accordance with Rule 12.2 of the Rules of Procedure. The names of members substituted follow (in brackets) the names of participating members.

Liste des représentants ou suppléants ayant signé le registre de présence, conformément à l'article 12.2 du Règlement. Le nom des personnes remplacées suit celui des Membres remplaçant, entre parenthèses.

ÅBERG, Boriana [Ms]	KITEV, Betian [Mr]
ÆVARSDÓTTIR, Thorhildur Sunna [Ms]	KOPŘIVA, František [Mr]
ALTUNYALDIZ, Ziya [Mr]	KOX, Tiny [Mr]
BAKRADZE, David [Mr]	KYRIAKIDES, Stella [Ms]
BARNETT, Doris [Ms]	LEITE RAMOS, Luís [M.]
BAYR, Petra [Ms] (ESSL, Franz Leonhard [Mr])	LEŚNIAK, Józef [M.] (MILEWSKI, Daniel [Mr])
BERGAMINI, Deborah [Ms]	LINK, Michael [Mr] (JENSEN, Gyde [Ms])
BERNACKI, Włodzimierz [Mr]	LOGVYNSKYI, Georgii [Mr]
BILDARRATZ, Jokin [Mr]	LOPUSHANSKYI, Andrii [Mr] (BEREZA, Boryslav [Mr])
BÖKE, Selin Sayek [Ms]	MASIULIS, Kęstutis [Mr] (TAMAŠUNIENĖ, Rita [Ms])
BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR, Rósa Björk [Ms]	MIKKO, Marianne [Ms]
BÜCHEL, Roland Rino [Mr] (FIALA, Doris [Mme])	MUÑOZ, Esther [Ms] (BARREIRO, José Manuel [Mr])
BUDNER, Margareta [Ms]	MUNYAMA, Killion [Mr] (POMASKA, Agnieszka [Ms])
BUSHATI, Ervin [Mr]	MURRAY, Ian [Mr]
BUTKEVIČIUS, Algirdas [Mr]	NENUTIL, Miroslav [Mr]
ÇELİK, Sena Nur [Ms]	NISSINEN, Johan [Mr]
CHRISTOFFERSEN, Lise [Ms]	OEHME, Ulrich [Mr] (KLEINWAECHTER, Norbert [Mr])
CILEVIČS, Boriss [Mr] (LAIZĀNE, Inese [Ms])	ORTLEB, Josephine [Ms] (AMTSBERG, Luise [Ms])
COAKER, Vernon [Mr] (WILSON, Phil [Mr])	ÖZSOY, Hişyar [Mr]
CORLĂȚEAN, Titus [Mr]	PACKALÉN, Tom [Mr]
CSENGER-ZALÁN, Zsolt [Mr]	PISCO, Paulo [M.]
D'AMBROSIO, Vanessa [Ms]	PSYCHOGIOS, Georgios [Mr] (TZAVARAS, Konstantinos [M.])
DOUBLE, Steve [Mr] (DONALDSON, Jeffrey [Sir])	RAMPI, Roberto [Mr]
EIDE, Espen Barth [Mr]	REISS, Frédéric [M.] (ABAD, Damien [M.])
EMRE, Yunus [Mr]	RIBERAYGUA, Patrícia [Mme]
ESTRELA, Edite [Mme]	ROCA, Jordi [Mr] (GARCÍA HERNÁNDEZ, José Ramón [Mr])
FILIPOVSKI, Dubravka [Ms] (OBRADOVIĆ, Marija [Ms])	RODRÍGUEZ HERNÁNDEZ, Melisa [Ms]
FOULKES, George [Lord] (SHARMA, Virendra [Mr])	ROJHAN GUSTAFSSON, Azadeh [Ms] (OHLSSON, Carina [Ms])
FRESKO-ROLFO, Béatrice [Mme]	ŞAHİN, Ali [Mr]
FRIDEZ, Pierre-Alain [M.]	SANTA ANA, María Concepción de [Ms]
GAFAROVA, Sahiba [Ms]	SCHÄFER, Axel [Mr]
GAILLOT, Albane [Mme]	SCHENNACH, Stefan [Mr]
GAVAN, Paul [Mr]	SCHOU, Ingjerd [Ms]
GERMANN, Hannes [Mr] (LOMBARDI, Filippo [M.])	SCHWABE, Frank [Mr]
GHILETCHI, Valeriu [Mr]	SIDALI, Zeki Hakan [Mr]
GOLUB, Vladyslav [Mr] (GERASHCHENKO, Iryna [Mme])	SOBOLEV, Serhiy [Mr]
GONÇALVES, Carlos Alberto [M.]	SOLEIM, Vette Wang [Mr] (WOLD, Morten [Mr])
GONCHARENKO, Oleksii [Mr]	ŞUPAC, Inna [Ms]
GORROTATEGUI, Miren Edurne [Mme] (BUSTINDUY, Pablo [Mr])	TORNARE, Manuel [M.] (MAURY PASQUIER, Liliane [Mme])
GRAF, Martin [Mr]	TÜRKEŞ, Yıldırım Tuğrul [Mr]
GRIMOLDI, Paolo [Mr]	VOGT, Günter [Mr] (WENAWESER, Christoph [Mr])
GUNNARSSON, Jonas [Mr]	WASERMAN, Sylvain [M.]
HAJIYEV, Sabir [Mr]	XUCLÀ, Jordi [Mr] (MATARÍ, Juan José [M.])
HEER, Alfred [Mr]	YEMETS, Leonid [Mr]
HEINRICH, Frank [Mr] (VOGEL, Volkmar [Mr])	
HOWELL, John [Mr]	
HUNKO, Andrej [Mr]	
JANSSON, Eva-Lena [Ms] (KARLSSON, Niklas [Mr])	
KASIMATI, Nina [Ms]	
KASSEGGER, Axel [Mr] (AMON, Werner [Mr])	
KATSIKIS, Konstantinos [Mr] (MEIMARAKIS, Evangelos [Mr])	
KAVVADIA, Ioanneta [Ms]	
KILIÇ, Akif Çağatay [Mr]	
KIRILOV, Danail [Mr] (GROZDANOVA, Dzhema [Ms])	

**Also signed the register / Ont également signé le registre
Representatives or Substitutes not authorised to vote /
Représentants ou suppléants non autorisés à voter**

BEREZA, Boryslav [Mr]
CORREIA, Telmo [M.]

Observers / Observateurs

GALVEZ, Rosa [Ms]
HARDER, Rachael [Ms]
SIMMS, Scott [Mr]
WHALEN, Nick [Mr]

Partners for democracy / Partenaires pour la démocratie

Representatives of the Turkish Cypriot Community (In accordance to Resolution 1376 (2004) of the Parliamentary Assembly)/ *Représentants de la communauté chypriote turque (Conformément à la Résolution 1376 (2004) de l'Assemblée parlementaire)*

CANDAN Armağan
SANER Hamza Ersan